

IRISH WRITING

THE MAGAZINE OF
CONTEMPORARY IRISH LITERATURE



Edited by
DAVID MARCUS
and
TERENCE SMITH

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NUMBER SEVEN



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MERVYN WALL



Leo The Lion

MR. BULLITT watched the last peg being hammered deep into the sandy soil. Then he stepped back and studied the circus tent. He was a squat, broadly-built man with a paunch discreetly modified by a crimson waistcoat plentifully ornamented with silver buttons. A partiality for whiskey had etched a lacework of purple veins in his cheeks and served to accentuate his nose, which stood out in the middle of his face like a doorknocker. All the same, he was an impressive figure. The red waistcoat and the swallow-tail coat lent him distinction; and his countenance, tho' it was by no means ill-natured, had the peculiar determination of a bulldog.

The wall of soiled canvas strained at its anchorage, shuddering and crackling before the stiff sea breeze. Mr. Bullitt removed a half-masticated cheroot from between his teeth and addressed the gaunt man in shabby cowboy dress who stood swinging his mallet as if he regretted that the hammering was over.

"It'll hold, but better go around and test the ropes."

The erection of the tent had been a troublesome business, and Mr. Bullitt had several times doubted the wisdom of his decision to pitch it in the sand dunes below the town. The sandy soil did not readily grip the wooden pegs, and again and again the ropes had to be lengthened so as to reach to the nearest tuft of grass and firmer soil; but the proximity of the Clonmore Annual Races, which were run on the strand, was an important commercial consideration; and now that the tent was up and its tattered pennant "Bullitt's Gigantic Circus" fluttering in the breeze, he felt that the additional labour had been justified.

The cowboy trailed off around the corner of the tent testing the ropes and giving a satisfying smack to each peg, while

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Mr. Bullitt shoved his extinguished cheroot back between his teeth and drove his two ham-like hands deep into his trouser's pockets. He stood for a moment preoccupied, his chin sunk on his cravat; then he roused himself and made his way between the welter of caravans and circus paraphernalia until he came to a large cage mounted on wheels. Three urchins were standing in front of it staring in awe at the lion reclining inside, his chin contentedly at rest on one of his huge, soft paws, and his tail lying across the floor of the cage like an exclamation mark. He was a very bedraggled sort of a lion. A great shock of tangled mane stood out above his forehead, his brow and nose were a mass of wrinkles, and tho' his eyes were half-open, he didn't seem to be thinking of anything in particular. As Mr. Bullitt came to a halt, the oldest of the urchins was slowly reading aloud the faded inscription which ran in curly letters along the top of the cage: "Leo the Man-Eating Lion."

"Gawd!" whispered the smallest boy. "Isn't he awful?"

Mr. Bullitt dug a match from the pocket of his crimson waistcoat and lit it with a quick stroke of his fingernail. He applied the flame to his cheroot and made a loud, sucking sound. The lion immediately raised a moth-eaten snout, and he and Mr. Bullitt contemplated one another in silence. Leo's bare face protruding from his massive mane and whiskers, reminded Mr. Bullitt irresistably of pictures he had seen of the composer, Richard Wagner. Leo, however, appeared to see nothing of interest in Mr. Bullitt, and the effort of gazing at his owner seemed to exhaust him: his tawny eyes became glazed, he blinked in a bored fashion, wrinkled up his nose and opened his mouth in a colossal yawn. Then with his head still raised he seemed to fall asleep.

"He hasn't got any teeth," hissed one of the small boys.

"Get to Hell out of here!" snapped Mr. Bullitt, making a threatening move in the direction of the youngsters, who immediately broke and scuttled away between the tents. The circus owner turned on his heel and went up the steps into the caravan where Hercule, the Lion Tamer, was sitting on a stool before the bucket which contained the gruel for Leo's evening meal. The Lion Tamer, a wiry, dissatisfied-looking creature, seemed sunk in unutterable gloom as he sat there slowly stirring the gruel with a child's hoopstick.

"That animal," began Mr. Bullitt. "That animal isn't in a fit state to be seen. Folks are beginning to take notice that he hasn't got any teeth. You should have screwed in his dentures before we came into town."

Hercule paused in his work and glanced across at the two huge dental plates which hung from a nail on the far wall. They were a masterpiece of the dental surgeon's art, and were set with two rows of the most formidable fangs imaginable.

"Leo is gettin' old," objected Hercule. "He don't like havin' all that furniture in his mouth unnecessarily."

"You don't have to tell me that he's gettin' old," snapped Mr. Bullitt. "He's a bleedin' Methuselah, but that's got nothing to do with it. We've got to keep the public in mind."

A look of obstinacy settled suddenly on the Lion Tamer's face. "You wouldn't like to have to walk around yourself," he said, "with a set of massive things like that clamped between your jaws. It's bad enough for him to have to put up with them during the evening performance."

"He doesn't have to walk around. All he has to do is lie in his cage all day in the lap of luxury, swalleyin' the best of food and drink. He's better off than any of us. Anyway, his personal feelings have nothing to do with the matter. We all have to make sacrifices in the show business. You better screw in his teeth, and leave 'em in until we're on the road again. Leo'll just have to become accustomed to them."

"All right," muttered Hercule. "I'll fix 'em as soon as I have his supper ready."

"Another thing," said Mr. Bullitt, peering into the bucket. "We'll have to cut down on his grub. About half that much will do. You can keep the rest for his breakfast."

Hercule breathed hard through his nostrils: "How can the unfortunate animal be expected to do himself justice in his act when he's weak with the hunger? We've been cuttin' down on his grub for the past six weeks. First, we deprived him of his bit of meat——"

"Meat is bad for him at his age. It'll only give him blood pressure. I can't afford to have him dying on my hands, a valuable animal like that. Anyway, it's a question of economics. Some of you fellows seem to think I'm made of money."

"That's another thing," said the Lion Tamer meaningly. "The staff is beginning to speculate as to whether they're ever going to be paid again. The clowns in particular is talking mighty nasty."

"You get paid, don't you?"

"I was last paid three weeks ago. That amounts to a couple of weeks' arrears."

Mr. Bullitt stared at him for a moment 'as if undecided whether or not to lose his temper. Then he removed the damp and shapeless cheroot from his mouth, looked at it critically,

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and with a sudden motion flung it through the doorway of the caravan.

"Come on out and have a drink, They've set up a bar on the strand."

A look of interest came to the Lion Tamer's face. He gave the gruel a final wind with the hoopstick, and placed the bucket in a corner. Then he arose and followed the circus owner down the steps of the caravan into the open air.

From the edge of the sand dunes the whole fawny expanse of beach lay stretched before them, mile after mile of unbroken sand. Beyond it, the sea, corrugated with long lines of rollers, moved with monotonous regularity towards the shore. The sight of so much water seemed distasteful to the Lion Tamer. He frowned and quickened his pace towards the tent where alcohol was being served. They made their way towards the straggling crowd of some three or four hundred people, which had congregated in the corner of the strand where the Races were being held. Yokels stood about with their hands in their pockets staring at nothing or wandered aimlessly about. The town's cornerboys were clustered in the neighbourhood of the bookmakers' pitch, where four portly individuals in check suits and hard grey hats were shouting the odds for the last race. Nearby, half-a-dozen planks had been laid across upright barrels and crowned with a thin railing. This was the judges' stand, and the three judges seemed to have brought their families and all their friends along with them. Certainly, the stand accommodated so many people that it was difficult to believe that anyone could stir a foot without falling off. Some distance away two jockeys were rolling in the sand to all appearances attempting to throttle one another. An allegation of bumping in the previous race seemed to have been resented, and a circle of onlookers watched with interest, but made no attempt to separate the combatants. The women and girls did not mingle with the men, but sat in little groups at the edge of the sand dunes drinking lemonade and eating sweets from paper bags.

"It's a shabby affair," said the Lion Tamer morosely.

"These small town races always are," replied Mr. Bullitt waving aside a three-card-trick man, who had appeared from nowhere and set up a miniature table in front of him. "Let's see first how our side-shows are doing."

The Aunt Sally man reported that business was slack, but Joe, the Barrel Man, seemed to be doing well. Joe's job was to kneel in a barrel while sporting members of the public flung heavy wooden staves at him from a distance of thirty paces.

The barrel protected him up to his chest, and in each hand he held a short, stout stick, with which to strike aside the missiles that came hurtling towards his head. One of the circus cowboys had the custody of the supply of staves, which he handed out to interested members of the public at the rate of fivepence for three. The cowboy was kept running back and forward picking up the clubs that had been flung, and returning them to circulation. It was also his duty to see that no competitor crossed the line drawn in the sand thirty paces from the barrel. The side-show was obviously a popular one: men who had lost money playing the horses seemed to work the venom out of their systems by flinging the wooden clubs at the barrel-man's head. During a pause in the proceedings Mr. Bullitt walked across the pitch.

"You seem to be doing well."

"Ay," replied Joe doubtfully, fingering a black eye.

"I see that you let one of them through your guard," said Mr. Bullitt jovially.

Joe mouthed a blasphemy. "These countrymen are too god-damned determined. Sooner or later one of them will take my life."

"Don't worry about that. You're doing fine. From what I see we'll net a good few pounds from this."

Joe did not reply. He was watching with a nervous eye a burly farmer who had put down money for all the clubs available, and was peeling off his jacket with an air of exceptional resolution. Mr. Bullitt turned away and joined the impatient Lion Tamer, and together they made their way to the refreshment tent. Their entry caused a stir of interest, and as they pushed through the crowd towards the plank resting on two empty tea chests, which served as counter, room was made for them in the place of honour beside the police sergeant, a huge man whose mottled face was half-submerged in a pint tumbler.

"Good evening, gentlemen," said Mr. Bullitt, drawing a crumpled note from the pocket of his scarlet waistcoat and tossing it carelessly on the counter. There was a chorus of 'Good evening, sir,' from the circle of drinkers. When the two newcomers had been served, the Sergeant pushed his cap on to the back of his head and addressed Mr. Bullitt respectfully.

"You're the gentleman that runs the circus?"

"Yes, I'm Bullitt."

"Very fine show you seem to have."

"The best on the road."

"I see that you have a whole menagerie of animals advertised—a waltzing buffalo and two performing seals. Ever since I

was a child I've had a great liking for the animals you meet in a circus."

Mr. Bullitt coughed and looked at the floor. "We've had a heavy loss lately. The buffalo died on us. The posters were already printed, and I haven't had time to have them altered."

"That's too bad," said the Sergeant sympathetically.

"Yes, and the seals too. Some young ruffins fed them with nuts one night when no one was looking, and choked them both."

"Was that long ago?" enquired a foxy man with a red scarf, who stood leaning on the counter beyond the Sergeant. Mr. Bullitt raised his eyes and looked at the stranger suspiciously. The words seemed to have been too softly spoken to be without some ulterior meaning. The man with the red scarf was a thin, auburn-haired fellow with a suggestion of a smile hovering permanently in the neighbourhood of his mouth.

"About four years ago," replied Mr. Bullitt brusquely and turned again to the Sergeant. "It's a wonder," he said in a bantering tone, "that the police don't keep a better eye on the young ruffians of a town and not have them murdering valuable animals."

The Sergeant grinned: "The poor police. People expect them to be everywhere. The Race Committee has been at me all the week to have the strand patrolled so as to keep the young monkeys from moving the flags that mark the course. You'd think we were nursemaids. There's some men are terrible kill-joys. I declare to God they even begrudge the poor kids their little bit of fun. And I'm tellin' you, the children are having the time of their lives to-day. They played such hell with the flags before the second race that no one knew where the touchline was, and all the horses ran into the sea."

The Sergeant's giant frame shook with laughter. "I'm fond of children myself," he added by way of explanation.

A small sportily-dressed gentleman who had been listening intently, could contain himself no longer.

"These races are nothing but a hoax," he burst out savagely. "The judges are slipping down from the stand and betting money on the horses themselves. I've seen them doing it myself. It's a scandal."

The Sergeant emitted a great shout of laughter.

"It's true," grinned the foxy man with the red scarf, "but sure that only adds to the interest. There's a crowd trailing the judges around to see what they'll back, and the bookies don't know where they are with the prices alternately rocketing

and slumping in a most incredible manner."

"I don't think it's funny," snapped the sporting gentleman. "It's nothing short of criminal." He glared around him, banged down his glass on the counter and left the tent. When the Sergeant had recovered from a fresh paroxysm of merriment, he turned his sweating face to Mr. Bullitt.

"Have you any animals at all in that circus of yours, or is it a hoax too?"

Mr. Bullitt stiffened. "We have a man-eating lion, a most valuable animal. I wouldn't part with that animal for five hundred pounds."

"Did he ever eat anyone yet?" enquired the tramp with the red scarf.

Mr. Bullitt did not deign to reply. Instead, he turned to the Sergeant. "Who's your companion?" he enquired coldly. "He seems to have a peculiar sense of humour."

"Him? Do you not know him? I thought that rogue was known throughout the length and breadth of the land. He's Larry Hamill, the slipperiest poacher in the whole country. I've been trying to catch him for the past fifteen years, and I haven't succeeded yet."

The humour of the situation was nearly too much for the Sergeant. He bent double and rocked back and forward, his face scarlet with the effort to laugh without hurting himself. He loosened the collar of his tunic at last and gave vent to a long gasp.

"You have me killed, the two of you," he managed to say.

Mr. Bullitt knew from long experience on the road the expediency of being on good terms with the representatives of central government, so he permitted himself a tight smile, but it faded as he caught sight of the quizzical mockery in Larry Hamill's face.

"Tell us about the last man your lion killed."

Mr. Bullitt stared disdainfully at the tatterdamalion poacher, but he could think of nothing crushing to say. He turned and looked at Hercule for assistance, but the Lion Tamer merely dropped his eyes and looked into his empty glass.

"Another two whiskies," snapped Mr. Bullitt.

When their glasses had been refilled, and Mr. Bullitt had slowly and thoughtfully placed a couple of coins on the counter, he turned and threw a contemptuous glance at the foxy-headed poacher. Then he cleared his throat importantly and addressed himself to the whole circle of listeners.

"The thing to remember about wild beasts, is that tho' they may be trained, they can never in fact be tamed. Isn't that so, Hercule?"

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The Lion Tamer nodded his head bleakly.

The circus owner fixed his eyes haughtily on the poacher's red scarf. "You will understand that it is impossible for me openly to admit that Leo has taken human life. I would be cutting my own throat if I made such an admission, for the authorities would insist that he be destroyed. Amn't I right, Sergeant?"

The Sergeant nodded in confirmation.

"In the interest of the show business my lips are sealed, but I can assure you that no more bloody-minded beast has ever walked the Jungle. I doubt if his like has ever been seen for cold ferocity."

The audience was visibly impressed.

"The last lion tamer I had was so foolish as once to turn his back on Leo. He has regretted it ever since."

His listeners stirred uneasily. "What happened?" enquired the Sergeant in a small voice.

"With one blow of his paw," said Mr. Bullitt dramatically, "Leo swept the buttock off him. He was never the same man after."

"Great God!" said the barman. "And did the lion try to eat him?"

"He'd have eaten him, bones and all, only that we managed to drag him from the cage in the very nick of time while we kept Leo in a corner by playing fire hoses on him."

"It seems to be a dangerous occupation, lion taming," commented the Sergeant. "I wouldn't fancy it at all."

"Dangerous!" echoed Mr. Bullitt. "The first lion tamer I had—— well, I'd prefer not talk about it."

He raised his hat reverently, and turning, gulped down his whiskey as if the recollection of the terrible scene was too much for him. A gloom settled on his listeners. They stood silent, their pint tumblers gripped in their fists, staring dejectedly in front of them as if in sorrowful contemplation of the many hazards to which human life is subject. At that moment a man pushed his way through the crowd.

"You better come quick, Sergeant. They've chased a welshing bookmaker into the sea, and he refuses to come out without police protection."

The Sergeant muffled a curse and drained his glass. "Is he still in the water?"

"He's up to his waist, and they're throwing stones at him. He's promising that they'll all be paid to-morrow, but they don't seem to believe him."

The Sergeant buttoned the collar of his tunic and left the

tent. Mr. Bullitt, well satisfied with the impression which he had made, signed to Hercule, and they also pushed their way out into the open air. They walked back in silence towards the caravans among the sand dunes. In the entrance to the big tent there was a group of circus workers.

"I wonder what's wrong now," said Mr. Bullitt gratingly, and he quickened his pace.

The crowd divided so as to make way for him.

"It's Joe the Barrel Man," volunteered one of the clowns. "He's knocked out. We carried him up here. We thought he had concussion at first, but he seems to be coming around now."

Joe was stretched prone on a heap of sacks, his head supported by a young woman in tights. She was trying to force a glass of milk between his teeth, but it was apparent that Joe didn't like the taste. There was an ugly bruise on his forehead.

"What the hell are you doing here?" snarled Mr. Bullitt. "Why aren't you in your barrel?"

"I'm through, boss," said Joe in a weak voice. "I'm quittin' while I'm still alive."

"I never knew such nonsense. A little tap of a stick!"

"It's all very fine for you to talk, sir, but I've a mother at home to think of."

"You're making good money, and now you want to quit! I'll give you a bonus if you get back into that barrel. For my sake, Joe."

"Nothing doing, boss. Pay me my money and I'll go. That is, if I'm ever able to raise myself on to my legs again."

"Don't give in to Fortune, Joe. What's a little stroke of a stick? Why, in my father's day they used to use a hatchet. Sure, we're all friends. If you leave us now, we'll think you're nothing but a coward."

"I'd rather be a coward than a corpse," said Joe, and he closed his eyes.

Mr. Bullitt turned aside. There was a bitter expression on his face. "I'm disappointed in Joe. I thought he had more manhood in him."

"Hadn't we better call a doctor?" asked one of the clowns. "That's a grievous-lookin' contusion he has on his poll."

"Ay, get him a doctor if he want one, but I'll dock the cost of it out of his salary."

That night the circus tent was crowded, and the audience watched breathlessly as Leo was put through his paces. Hercule, clad in a shabby pair of tights, guided the lion with a long whip from one high stool to another. Leo climbed and

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sprang as directed, growling forlornly as he felt the twinges of rheumatism. When he sat on the highest stool of all and looked at the distance he would have to climb down again, he raised his muzzle in the air and howled heart-brokenly. The Sergeant, in the front row, wiped the sweat from his forehead and thought of the fate of Hercule's predecessors. The Lion Tamer kept Leo on the move, tipping and prodding him with the long whip, because there was a danger that if Leo was left for a few minutes sitting in the one place, he would fall asleep. At length the lion was guided down again, growling and complaining, to the floor of the cage, and Mr. Bullitt, stalking to the centre of the arena, announced in ringing tones the high spot of the evening—the intrepid Hercule would now place his head in the lion's mouth. A shudder of expectancy rippled through the audience, there was a roll of drums, and a green spotlight picked out Leo as he wearily opened his mouth and displayed his terrible fangs. Hercule laid aside the whip and approached cautiously. He placed his two hands on Leo's corrugated cheeks, and unnoticed by the audience, slipped the usual block of wood between the lion's back teeth, just in case Leo should grow tired of holding his mouth open and close it without giving due warning. Then the intrepid Hercule carefully introduced his head between Leo's gigantic dentures. Women screamed and buried their faces on the shoulders of their escorts, while the men, with white faces, stared fascinated at the terrible spectacle. Slowly Hercule withdrew his head, there was another roll of drums, and a moment later he was bowing in the centre of the ring amid a thunder of applause.

When the lights in the great tent had been extinguished, and a couple of cowboys were treading their way between the caravans essaying the impossible task of hunting the children of the town away from the circus ground, Leo ambled slowly across his cage and peered into the bucket which contained his evening meal. At first he could scarcely believe his eyes. He stared incredulously, but there was no mistake—the bucket was only half-full. He looked to left and right, and then opening his jaws, emitted an indignant roar. It was a hollow, reverberating roar, which seemed to come from the depths of his stomach. Two small boys who had been fiddling with the catch on the door of the cage, immediately sprang to the ground and raced off into the darkness. Leo did not even bother to glance after them. He knew that the bars of the cage were there to protect him from human beings, and that as long as the bars were intact, he was safe: so he paid no attention to noises outside. Anyway, his mind was too taken up with his wrongs.

He kept his eyes fixed on his meagre supper, growling at the bucket as he gradually backed away from it until his hind-quarters came in contact with the door. To his astonishment he felt the door opening behind him. He turned his head and studied this extraordinary phenomenon, slowly coming to a realisation of the infinite possibilities which were opening before him. Normally he would never have thought of exchanging the safety of his cage for the unknown dangers of the outside world, but his mood at the moment was one of extreme exasperation. If they weren't going to give him his customary measure of food; be damned but he'd go and get it for himself. He did not hesitate for long. He paused for a moment only at the open door, then bounded softly to the ground. He stood for a short while sniffing the air to left and right, his tail lashing gently: then he padded off cautiously into the darkness.

Early the following morning Hercule burst into Mr. Bullitt's caravan with the news of the calamity. The circus magnate sat up in his bunk in his nightshirt and upbraided the Lion Tamer.

"He must be got back at once or it's the end of us. We're near enough to bankruptcy as it is, without losing our star performer. You hear me: he must be got back."

The news spread with astonishing rapidity. When the Sergeant was informed that Leo the Man-Eating Lion was abroad, he turned white. He fumbled and dropped his keys as he hurried to open the Station press to issue revolvers to his men. About midday a furious barking of dogs announced the breakneck arrival of a breadvan in the town. The driver was standing up lashing his horse with the reins. He sprang from the van and shouted his news, that three miles out in the country he had seen a telegraph linesman marooned up a pole while Leo lay fast asleep at the base. The linesman had shouted piteously that he had been up the pole for two hours, that he was riddled with cramp, and that he expected to fall off any moment. A volunteer party with scythes and pitchforks crowded into the cars which the police quickly commandeered, and set out for the scene, but on their arrival they found nothing of Leo except some moulted hair. The linesman had to be taken from the telegraph pole by ladder. He was quite incapable of giving an articulate account of the affair and had to be assisted to walk by two men holding him under the armpits. He was conveyed back to the town and put to bed in the County Hospital.

By the afternoon all the schoolmasters in the neighbourhood

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had got through on the 'phone to the Department of Education in Dublin and obtained permission to close their schools.

"What I'm afraid of," said the Lion Tamer, "is that some of these yahoos of policemen will frighten Leo. A sudden shock at his age might have serious consequences. They're tearing around the countryside on bicycles with revolvers. You can never trust a policeman to act sensible: they're that wild when they get excited, they might even open fire and injure the poor inoffensive animal. Oh, Mr. Bullitt, sir, Leo has been with us a long time now. You'll have to do something to save him. Can't you go to the Sergeant and explain that he's the most harmless lion that ever walked on four paws? Honest to God, boss, that animal is real innocent. I don't believe that in all his life he has even had a bad thought."

"Keep your mouth shut. He has been billed for years as an animal of most unexampled ferocity. Do you want to have me prosecuted for fraud? Anyway, if it's made public that he's nothing but a cissy, we might as well take his act out of the show, and where'd we be then? In the bankruptcy court, every man-jack of us."

That evening when it was reported that Leo had been sighted on the railway line some miles outside the town, the driver of the Dublin Mail refused to take his train out of Clonmore Railway Station. He was backed strongly by the fireman, who insisted that he had seen in the films lions springing unerringly from overhanging trees on to innocent passers-by. Neither threats of dismissal nor bribes could move the engine driver. There were too many overhead bridges on the line, he said; he didn't mind for himself, but he had a wife and five children dependant on him. The indignant passengers had to be accommodated for the night in the railway station.

"I don't think I'll be able to sleep," said the Lion Tamer sorrowfully, "when I think of that poor animal with nowhere to lay his head."

"I wish I could lay my hands on him," was Mr. Bullitt's savage rejoinder. "He has the whole life of the county paralysed."

Mr. Bullitt's temper was not improved by the arrival the following morning of a farmer claiming compensation for the loss of a goat, shot dead during the night by a nervous policeman, whose only excuse was that it had failed to answer his challenge.

Some five miles away in a small belt of trees Leo lay, his chin resting dejectedly on his great soft paws. Half-an-hour before, while sheltering in a ditch beside the road, he had been

startled by the sudden appearance of a small boy on a bicycle. The unusual sight had nearly thrown Leo into convulsions. He had flung himself in desperation through the hedge and made off across the fields. It was the worst thing that he had yet experienced, and his heart was still thumping against his ribs. On the previous day he had ambled along the road until the pads of his paws were sore from the hard macadam, telling himself that sooner or later he would surely come on something to eat. Then he had tried the railway line for a bit, but he found the sleepers so placed as to render a prolonged walk uncomfortable, and you couldn't trot on them at all. Now he lay motionless except for a slight twitching of the ears, wishing to heaven that he was safe back in his cage. He lay there hour after hour until the urge of hunger became so strong that he could not bear to remain still any longer. He reared himself slowly to his feet, moaned plaintively, and started to wander disconsolately across the field. As he was mooching through a gap, he saw something which brought him to a sudden halt. A few paces from where he stood, a fox terrier puppy was nuzzling a bone. It was a very large bone, far too big for so small a dog: in fact, it was nearly as big as himself. When the puppy saw Leo, the eyes nearly popped out of his head. For one moment he gazed incredulously. Then he rolled over on his back, all his paws relaxed in token of surrender. But Leo was not taking any chances: he had once been bitten by a furious sealyham which had managed to worm its way between the bars of his cage, so his approach was wary. When he was near enough, he put out a cautious paw and quickly flicked the bone in his own direction. In a moment he had it between his teeth and was running back the way he had come. The puppy, apparently of opinion that his last hour had come, was lying on his back with his eyes closed; but when after a reasonable time it was borne in on him that nothing was happening to him, he ventured to open his eyes. Observing that the coast was clear, he rolled over on to his paws again, and with his tail between his legs scuttled off as fast as he could in the opposite direction.

Meanwhile, Leo, when he adjudged that he was at a safe distance from the fellow-animal which he had wronged, lay down to inspect his loot. It was a toothsome bone with shreds of meat still adhering to it, and his sniffing nose told him that it was packed with marrow inside. He wrapped a paw over the bone so as to keep it steady while he tried to get a grip on it with one side of his jaw. But the bone was slippery, and the fact that he was wearing false teeth was an additional

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difficulty. He licked the bone several times, moved over on to one elbow, and tried again. With his eyes half-closed and his nose wrinkled almost into a knot, he at last managed to get a firm grip. He exerted all the pressure of which his jaws were capable. There was an ominous crack, and several of his fangs fell out.

In the market square in Clonmore a trembling small boy leaned his bicycle against the town lamp post and related to the horrified crowd which pressed around him, how he had been chased for miles along the road by a lion.

"There's nothing else for it," said the Sergeant as he picked up the 'phone. "I should have done it before. I'm going to call out the military."

The Lion Tamer had been drinking heavily, but this was the final blow. He took to his bunk and refused to get up.

"This is the end. They'll riddle the unfortunate animal with bullets."

"Ay," said his master bitterly, "and he's not even insured."

During the ensuing week terror possessed the countryside. In outlying farms, behind doors heavily bolted and barred, farmers stood in the centres of their kitchens gripping pitchforks. Upstairs the women of the house tried to quieten the children, while all listened trembling to the soft pad of footsteps in the farmyard outside, the scratching sounds and the inevitable clucking and squawking from the poultry house. In the morning when the farmer ventured to withdraw the bolts, it was to find that nothing remained of his hens but feathers scattered widely in the yard and on the neighbouring road.

"I wouldn't have believed that Leo was capable of it," said the Lion Tamer sorrowfully.

"I don't know what sort of government we have in this country. They can't even catch a wayward lion, who's probably only too anxious to give himself up if he was certain he could do it with safety."

The authorities in fact were doing their best. A military cordon had been flung around the area, and six sharpshooters had been detailed from the Curragh Camp, but while there was a certain amount of banging at night, which gave the local

people confidence, the only casualties so far had been among livestock.

On the following Saturday evening Hercule, his face radiant, burst into Mr. Bullitt's caravan.

"Leo has been vindicated!"

Mr. Bullitt sprang from his bunk. "Have they captured him?"

"No, but his character has been cleared. Last night a farmer named Murphy saw that thieving poacher, Larry Hamill, creeping out of his yard with a sack full of dead hens. The poacher stood in the yard as bold as you please scattering feathers up in the air and in all directions, so as to put the blame on the unfortunate lion. Old Murphy peppered him with a shot-gun from the window."

"That villianous twister! I knew he was no good. The dirty double-crosser! Have they arrested him?"

"No, he's in the County Hospital with the doctors digging the shot out of him with knives. They've arrested Old Murphy and charged him with attempted murder."

"They can't go on with it. There'll be a revolution in the neighbourhood if they do."

"That's the authorities' look-out. Maybe now that Leo has been proved innocent, the Government will call off its gunmen, and we can get a little sleep at night."

The disclosure of the poacher's perfidy was followed by a revulsion of popular feeling in favour of the malignant Leo. It was realised that there was not a tittle of evidence that the lion had done any harm to man or beast; moreover, as he had not been seen for a week, the belief began to grow that he was either deceased or that he had moved out of the neighbourhood altogether. The local people began to clamour for the withdrawal of the military sharpshooters, who were felt to be a greater danger than the lion. They became confirmed in this belief when one of the sharpshooters shot all the thatch off a poor man's cottage with a tommy-gun one night, leaving the startled tenant and his wife exposed to the stars.

The military were withdrawn, and after a couple of nights undisturbed by random rifle fire, Leo ventured to put his head out of the bog-hole where he had gone to ground. He was very scraggy and emaciated. His bones were nearly protruding through his hide like the ribs of a broken umbrella. There was no moon overhead, and no one knew how he found his way

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back to the circus. Hunger may have sharpened his homing instinct, for he had subsisted for a week on an inadequate vegetable diet, mostly watercress and nettles. The Lion Tamer had hopefully left the door of the cage open, and one morning he was rewarded. Leo was found squatting on his haunches inside, looking rather sheepish, his paws tar-stained, and his mane full of pieces of briar and bristling with burrs. He was a very sorry-looking lion, but he purred deep down in his throat and rubbed his scarred muzzle against Hercule as the Lion Tamer flung his arms around his neck. And Leo noted with satisfaction that, excited as the Lion Tamer was, he did not neglect to test every bar of the cage and lock and padlock the door before running to prepare a bumper meal and announce the return of the prodigal.



DESMOND J. CLARKE



A Little Matter Of Business

WHEN I opened the back door and heard the noisy footsteps in the yard I knew the Knacker had come.

He was a wizened dried up bit of a man in a stained dust-coat and he wore a dishevelled felt hat, the brim drooping down like the untidy thatch on the hen house.

He touched the brim of his hat. "Tell your father," he said in a surly voice, "that Mr. Reilly's here an' wants to see him."

"Mr. Reilly?" I echoed. I had never heard his name before for I grew up hearing everybody call him the Knacker, and this I thought was his real name.

"Aye, Mr. Reilly. Your father'll know, he sent for me," he said, pulling the piece of straw he was chewing from between his lips.

"What does he want you for?" I asked innocently.

"That's all right, son, you just tell your father Mr. Reilly's here."

I stood looking at the wizened little man with the dried monkey-like face almost hidden in the shadow of his hat. I didn't like him, not only because he appeared to me to be a hard unsmiling sort of man, but because he smelled, smelled of a stable that wasn't very clean or fresh.

"Hurry along, son, this is a little matter of business between your father and myself," he said, when I showed no inclination to move.

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A little matter of business! The phrase awoke a sleeping memory. I thought hard for a moment or two and then I remembered. Yes, the Knacker was in our yard before, not so long ago either, and it was the same then, he wanted father on a little matter of business. It was the day the roan bullock was torn on the wire of Lacey's fence.

I liked the roan bullock for he was the wisest and friskiest calf I ever saw. He was an unfortunate beast though, unfortunate all right. He was only a few months old when he was buried under ten cocks of hay in the new barn, and we thought we'd never find him alive. Then he caught himself in Lacey's fence, tearing a great red cut in his chest. It was then the Knacker came and I was sent off about my own affairs as he wanted to see my father on a little matter of business.

I didn't rightly know what the business was, but later I saw the roan bullock going down the avenue straddled across a float, and he was dead.

Whilst I was thinking of all this my father came into the yard. He was a big man, making two of the other, and he was muck up to his knees.

"Good day, Reilly," he said, but his voice didn't sound as if he was pleased to see him.

The Knacker grinned and I could see his broken yellow teeth.

"I came round about that——" he stopped abruptly, looked down at me, and then gave a hard little cough that wasn't real "—that . . . that little matter of business, sir, you wanted done."

"Yes. Yes," my father said and he scratched his head under his hat.

"I've the float over beyant." The Knacker jerked a crooked thumb over his shoulder.

"There's not very much wrong with the horse," my father was saying. "Not very much indeed except that she's past her time, well past it." He gave a little snort. "Damn it, she's almost as old as myself." And he nodded his head up and down.

"I understand. I understand. Perhaps though you could sell her, sir. Maybe she's good for a few more months," the Knacker suggested, a hard little light in his tight eyes.

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My father shook his head, pursed his lips tightly together for a moment and then spat strongly. "I wouldn't have the heart to sell her much less give her away. Sort of throwing her out to be worked to death in a month or two. She's nearly finished now, just skin and bone. She doesn't owe us anything so I'd rather see her go under decently and be finished with."

I knew then they were talking about the old mare, and when she whinnied softly in the stable a lump came into my throat, and I wondered what they were going to do with her. She was woefully thin all right; the big bones stuck out on her rump like rocks in a field, and streams of water had made channels from her eyes.

The Knacker snuffed up noisily through his nose and made a grimace.

"Whatever you say, sir," he said, nodding his head. "Whatever you say for 'tis your mare. I've got me. . . ." Again he stopped abruptly and looked at me as though he didn't like me.

"Oh," my father laughed, and jerked his head up. "You needn't worry about the lad."

"No?"

"No, 'tis time he started to grow up and see things for himself or he'll never make a good farmer. Isn't that right, Johnny?"

I could feel my father's hand fondling my head, a big clayey hand against my forehead.

The Knacker grunted. "I've got the killer here," he said, indicating the bulge in the big pocket of his coat.

My father nodded his head, and said, "I think you'd better have her out here in the yard, there's no sense in getting the body wedged between the walls of the stable."

"Just as you say, sir."

Father opened the stable door and called the mare. She came out slowly, a big bony creature; her eyes were dull and listless just as if they were glazed over with some kind of film. Her coat was rough and unglossed. She walked slowly, apathetically, dragging her heavy feet over the cobbled stones.

"Whoa, there, whoa," the Knacker said, and he patted the mare's nose. She seemed to smell him, and dislike the smell,

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for she turned her head and moved away from him.

My father stroked her gently. "Easy girl, easy now," he said very softly and quietly to her, and she stood still as though she understood him.

The Knacker stood in front of her and parted the unclipped mane falling untidily over her forehead.

I looked down at the ground when I saw him take what looked like a piece of iron from his pocket. I closed my eyes ever so slightly and waited. There was a sharp thud like the very distant sound of a gun, a sound that was muffled and thick.

The mare's legs doubled under her as though she was going to lie down, but she rolled over on her side, and her legs kicked the air jerkily for a second or two, and that was all.

I let my breath out with a great rush.

Father nodded his head once, handed the Knacker some money and then walked across the yard into the house. He never said a word.

I stood looking at the mare. The Knacker brought the float round to where she lay. Then, very quickly, with no fuss or bother, he tied ropes around the taut outstretched legs. He turned the handle of the windlass at the head of the float, and the dead mare was drawn up and straddled across it, just like the roan bullock.

The Knacker wiped his hand across his mouth as if nothing had happened. Then he spat out and turned into the stable. "Keep an eye on me horse, son," he said over his shoulder, "whilst I attend to a little matter of business." This time his unsmiling face had a broad grin.

I turned away and left him.



EWART MILNE

Starting Point

Which way to Parnassus? I looked at the signposts,
and every road they said uncovered local colour,
but gave no other direction. Sowings had their harvests:
how should I stay to reap a corn I'd never sown?
"I'll take the road to Dublin, anyhow. On my own
"in the city now, our ancient capital raised to art,
"I'm sure to meet with her. She'll walk down Grafton Street,
"lost in the snows of a dream, on her way to the Abbey.
"Maybe if I ask she'll show me how to get to Parnassus?"
But I'd heard she was a queen who gave away no passes—
unlike the girl an hour ago who smiled at me especially,
only I'd lost her, too hot in pursuit, at a laneway's turning.

There was nothing for it but shanks-mare. To Dublin then.
I'd catch the midday bus at Cabinteely? Already
the sun's conquest lay heavily on Wicklow's chequered glen,
and the townlands' pattern drowzed inconsequentially in a smoky
violet haze. O world, which road? Was she girl or myth?
My head swam with thoughts of suddenly coming upon her—
finding her body delectable and garnering its rich tilth
among the bramble's purple patch. The burden of her
was heat and choking me. The hills were looking. Lazy cows
rotated their grass cuds unheeding. All for her sake.

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Then night. I cried for love among the bracken and furze—
and woke to a gunman's shadow on the blind reading Shelley
and Blake.

I, my own Pegasus. But how to get my feet off the ground,
how to get airborne from wailing mud, from cursing stone,
in a city raised for art to murder art, as Joyce had found?
The years the same old Donnybrook airs, ranting Tom Malone!
The years the maidenhead all would break, maiden forlorn
who still won every battle against every partitioning,
and heeded not the drunk man's thick tongued muttering.
but walled the seed of poetry in her brave unconquered womb,
At that I raised my head. To go was all. O deathless tomb,
I stand upon your threshold where the light alone is listening
and the poet's out of time. Where no other's being burns—
bourne to which not he, but only that he sings, returns.

MAURICE DUGGAN

Machinery Me

I WAS working at the time and hating every minute of it. It was factory work and deadly monotonous. Every morning it was a drag to get out of bed and the limited, unthinking routine was worse than a hard sentence. It wasn't doing much good to swim against the tide of regimented existence but hell, I was keeping my head up and my senses clear, and at the best the whole merry-go-round of work and sleep couldn't last more than a month or two. I probed into the dull, mediocre, comfortable lives of the crowd I worked with, but I kept clear of their pattern. The men were fair company for one or two drinks and the women probably had their attractions, but they had passed around most of the forces which could have affected them and were content with evenings at a movie and an occasional dance. They poured into the town in the mornings, hanging sleepily in the racketing trams, and poured home in the evenings, minds intent upon their evanescent pleasures or upon their unalterable customs.

This day was sunny. I can remember the sunshine as if I were feeling it and seeing it now. The wind was off the water, with a keen chill, but in the shelter the world was fine and warm and very bright.

I worked all morning. I wasn't talking much, just moving steadily, feeling sore at the job and letting my thoughts drift on, my hands feeding metal into the machine with the precision of long habit. There was a heavy press operating on the floor above thumping in a perfect rhythm and shaking the whole building. Usually it is annoying only at the start, but this day every quivering pound of the down-driving shaft

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wormed into my brain and the concert was piling up inside me pretty fast.

The whistle blew for lunch and I grabbed my coat and got outside in a hurry. The sun was still there, stronger now, and I worked through the crowd down to the waterfront. The wharves were busy and crowded with workers, sitting placidly in the sun, dipping often into the brown paper-bags they carried. I remembered my own lunch, in the locker in the factory, without wanting it. I felt an implacable hatred for the figures, seated smugly in the sunshine, eating and talking, pawns without knowing it. The world, the people, the things that really count, the words they use, the looks on their faces—these things would have held me the day before. That day, at that moment, I wanted the stupidity wiped from their faces with the realization of the hugeness of the thing that pushed them along the bored rut of existence. The thing that moulded them and held them with the fear of disapproval.

I found a seat, out of the wind, and sat there quite still, watching a shag dive deep and show again a full hundred yards away, and some moments later. I watched it until it flew off, rising from the water in a long planing lift.

I knew then I wasn't going back to work. There was no decision. At one minute I was sitting there watching the bird and hating the people, and then a minute later I was quiet again, feeling a calmness, inside. I was glad that I was in the world, amongst the people with their talk and their paper bags. The sun made me thirsty and I had a drink from a tap on the wharf.

My coat was on the seat beside me. I was sitting there with my sleeves rolled up feeling the sun on my bare arms. I remembered the book in my pocket. I took it out and looked at it, not wanting much to read. The dedication was 'To G.A.P.' and I riffled the pages, idly reading disconnected parts, picking out words and names: *Abyssinia*—*Nix*—*Ciaou*—*O'hello was a nigger*—and at the end of the book, the last word—*cain*. Printed pages, all with something to say, isolating a fragment of reality, of life, an illusion of completeness and unity. The thing meant nothing and I shut the book and looked around.

I was right on the end of the wharf looking straight across the harbour to the land curved away on the other side, hazy in the distance over the silver-bright water. Four men were fishing from the piles. Doing it quietly and pushing their con-

versation forth in low tones. The brown lines, tautened with leaden sinkers, seemed to bend at right angles where they entered the light green sea. A small coastal steamer was hauled in at the side of the quay. Rust had corroded pock-marks in the superstructure and the dark paint along her sides was streaked and patchy. I could just make out the name 'Tuhoe' on the bow.

I couldn't see anyone near me except a drunk sleeping in the sun. The harbour view was too much like a post-card picture and I turned to watch the drunk. All his clothes were black. His suit didn't match up but it was the one dull colour, smudged with grime and flecked with dust. His hat was pulped and battered, sitting well back on his head, with a crazy red feather a-jaunt in the band. A black spittle-marked shirt was open on his greasy throat and his shoes were tied with string. He was sitting with his back to the wharf-shed, leaning against it and bent almost double, looking like a question mark, poised above the square packing-case seat. His dirty ankles were bared below lifted cuffs.

I looked for a long time. He may not have been drunk although he was as dirty as a street corner in mid-winter. Under the rough stubble his face was firm. Down the wharf someone yelled and he woke easily, fully sensible, rubbing one eye and swivelling the other to take in the scene.

I wasn't quick enough and he caught me staring. He must have seen me blush because he looked carefully at me and spoke.

—Ain't you never seen a man asleep?

—I'm sorry, and I lied very glibly, I thought you were going to fall off the box.

He looked at the box and then at me again. Then he grinned. His teeth were very white.

—I could sleep safely on the edge of a razor.

—Yes?

—I've benched down on harder beds than this.

—Yes?

The conversation was a bit uneven and I added a word or so to keep it moving.

—You mean you're a tramp?

—Sundowner, son. Aussie, see? He slipped up his sleeve and I saw the kangaroo tattooed on the flat, muscular part of his forearm.

—Got that done in Auckland Pitt Street. Used to be a bloke there,

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—I said 'yes' again, with that questioning lift, and I felt like a fool.

—You not workin'?

—Afternoon off.

—Yes? Now he was saying it.

I moved in, one box closer. He was still three or four feet away and looked more unwashed.

—What do you do?

—Work in a factory.

—Here?

—Just up the road.

I offered him a cigarette and leaned over to light it. He was filthier than I had thought. On the back of his left hand was tattooed a small blue star.

—Like reading? He nodded at the book on my knee.

—Quite a bit.

—I used to be something of a reader myself, once. Ever read *Grey Wolf*?

—No. Who wrote it?

—Eh?

—Who was it by?

—Oh, I dunno. About that Turkish joker, Camel Parsha.

—I've never read it.

—Very good book. He nodded shrewdly and straightened his back. Yep. Quite a reader once. He took the book off my knee without touching me. His eyes were clear and moved quickly as he read.

—Hemingway. He stressed the aspirate and left the word hanging in the air. Is it good?

—Yes very. I think. I haven't read much of it yet.

—*Grey Wolf*. You oughta read that. Good stuff for fellers like you, if you like reading.

—I must read it. I didn't mean it and that's the way it sounded, but he seemed to miss the insincerity.

The 'Tuhoe' was loading cases and the wharfies started to shift the stack near me. I stood up and moved away. The cases smelt like spirits and one had 'Coromandel Hotel' labelled on the side. There was a heap of straw on the ground, scattered from the looser packing, and the sun was warming it and making it smell warm and earthy.

The sundowner handed me my book and moved away. About

ten yards off he stopped, hesitated, and came back.

—Lend me a couple of bob.

I was so surprised that I dug into my pocket and gave him three of the four shillings I possessed. I saw them lying in his hand before he closed his fist on them, and I wanted desperately to take one back, at least. He must have seen my uncertainty.

—Thanks. Boy scout deed.

He was gone. I never said anything. I never had time. I sat down again, on another box, and thought for a minute about him and about my money, which was now his. The sun was still strong and the men were still fishing. One of them caught a small yellow-tail and threw it on to the wharf. I opened the book, turned back the dog-ear and read on: *The night before I left, Rinaldi came to see me . . .*

I got the sack when I got back. The boss said I looked hot and I said it was the sun. He asked a lot of questions and I told the truth, hard, every time.

Finally he asked me if I wanted my job and I swore and got off a few words about the factory and the bosses. I was at the pay-office in half an hour.

Next day it was raining.



SAM HARRISON



Nocturne

(For Helga)

The tall ghost of the floodlit water-jet
diminishes; the city and its fête
lie far behind, though even here the lake
spawns with confetti and our craft
trail streamers in their wake.

Drone of accordeon and double-bass
drifts from the launch ahead; Elena's face,
tipsy beneath the awning, leans to call
a gibe that no-one hears; the night
makes shadows of us all . . .

Shadows and dreamers circling in a world
of velvet elegance, of darkness pearled
with swaying paper lanterns, warm with love,
while summer passes like a swan
or white sail on the wave.

MICHAEL LUCEY



White Horse to Fairyland

GAPING at Barney as he told us of a magic white horse, we didn't see the white horse coming.

"Ye must be here before sunrise," Barney was telling, "astride the rushes sayin' the magic words."

"We'll be here," says Patsy.

"Where's the best spot, Barney?" I ask.

We were sitting on the edge of the path, our legs over the stream. He looked straight ahead at a clump of rushes not lit by the sunset.

"That big clump there. 'Twill catch the first rays in the mornin'."

The three of us looked at it, thinking. Then Patsy asks, "No coddin' about the white horse?"

"Why should I cod?" Barney got a big sulky. "Of course, if ye don't deserve it, nothin' will happen; but he'll appear if you're good."

"Suppose on'y one is good?"

"The other will be left behind."

A clatter of hooves on earth made us look round. Coming along the path from the village direction was a big white horse.

There was no room for him to pass. We should have scrambled up the steep field but could only stare. Shining pure white in the red sunset, his mane flowing wild, he was a lovely sight. But nearly upon us, shaking the earth.

Barney, jumping last, just missed the front hooves. Knee-deep in a bog hole, he mutters, "The curse a' Christ!"

Patsy and I listened to the galloping noise till it faded.

I ask, "Was that tomorrow's horse?"

Barney grunted.

"He's just what I imagined, Barney, on'y I didn't think he'd

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make a sound."

But he was surly. All the way back he never spoke. Patsy and I never got that way after a wetting. We couldn't understand it.

As we reached the Castle I venture, "To-morrow mornin' isn't off, Barney?"

He growls, "No. The two of ye be here at four." And he slunk off between the houses.

We thought no more of his mood, talking of the wonders in store.

Asks Patsy, "Are you sure yer mother will let you come?"

That was the trouble. But I says, "Sure. Throw pebbles at me window and I'll be out."

Down home mother was sitting by the kitchen window. I told her my story.

She just looked at me with, "Pisheog!"

"But mother, you used to tell me these stories were true."

"I used to, when you were very young. But now I'm lettin' you find out for yourself."

"Then I'll go to find this out."

As I was rising so early, I went straight up to bed. Then mother came in, pleading, "Don't get up at that unearthly hour. Patsy wants to have you like himself: up like a lark before the lark. And as for Barney . . ."

Looking sad she went out.

But I was too full of the morning. Thinking of it kept me awake. And when sleep did come at last, I dreamt of thundering along on the white horse, gripping Patsy's shoulders, and a long white mane brushing my nose.

A crash!

I sat up in bed, rubbing my eyes. On the mat lay a gob. I ran to the window and, in the dim light outside, saw Patsy preparing to throw another stone.

"Hurry, Dan!" he cries. "We'll be late."

MICHAEL LUCEY

In a few minutes we were belting up to the Castle. Barney wasn't there.

"Hell!" Patsy mutters. "But he told us what to do so we can get along without him."

Off down the river road with us. I'd never been out at that hour. It felt very strange, as if something wonderful was beginning. Instead of a tired half-light becoming darkness, the fresh half-light was brightening. Young trees on each side swayed like living beings; and twitterings grew louder, the first dim shapes becoming birds and increasing as they sailed about.

We crossed the stream by the well and soon reached the clump of rushes.

"Just before the sun," says Patsy.

It felt damp as we got astride. But I also felt something was stirring underneath.

"White horse!" Patsy begins, looking back to see that I began too. "White horse! White horse! White horse! Louder, you, if you want him to hear."

"He'll hear. White horse! White horse!"

"'Tis gettin' like day. O'ny minutes left for a last burst. White horse! White horse! White horse!"

We shouted the magic words over and over, getting hoarse.

"The sun!" Patsy croaks. "White horse! White horse!"

We bawled on as the sun appeared. Then, as it rose clear of the fields, we fell silent together. I felt like crying.

Patsy whispers, "We're both bad."

"No. There's no fairyland."

"More like it. Nothin' for it now but back to bed," he yawns, shielding his eyes before the sun.

Dismounting the rushes, I turned; and spied, bestraddled on a clump of bushes by the stream, Barney watching us.

"Good mornin'!" he calls.

Patsy came beside me and we blared Barney.

"No white horse," cries Patsy. "Now you'll tell us we're both bad."

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Barney lifted one leg and brought it round till he was facing us. There was something in his hand. He threw the object and it fell just under our noses. I saw it was an empty bottle marked, "Paddy."

He laughed hoarsely. "Ye're disappointed, aren't ye?"

"Yes," I agree.

"Then why don't ye look behind ye?"

We looked—and our hearts jumped. Coming down between the blackberry bushes at a leisurely trot was a big white horse.

Comes the broken voice behind, "Don't ye want to ride away? Well, what are ye waitin' for?"

We ran to the horse. I held on to his fore legs as Patsy mounted, then climbed up myself. We were moving immediately. I felt very strange, something like the feeling of before sunrise.

The horse took us straight to where we had jumped yesterday. He pawed the path above, then pulled the rest of his body, we clinging to it, up to the path. As we hadn't fallen off there, I felt we'd never fall off now.

We were trotting along, gathering speed. Soon we were thundering along the path the white horse had taken alone yesterday, and the long mane was brushing my nose.



MARY LAVIN



The Small Bequest

IT was generally understood that when Miss Tate died she would leave a small bequest to her companion, Miss Blodgett. There had never been any direct statement of the old lady's intention in the matter, but it was felt by all their friends to be an understood thing. Meanwhile, of course, Miss Blodgett was getting an excellent salary, most of which she should have been able to put aside, for not only was her keep provided but, as well as sharing the necessaries of life with Miss Tate, she had full enjoyment of all the luxuries that the Tate family were continually bestowing upon the old lady; the sweets, the fruits, the books, the papers. For Miss Tate, at eighty, was able only to appreciate the kind thought of the giver, the bodily appreciation of the gifts fell entirely to Miss Blodgett. As she herself often remarked, Miss Blodgett was just like one of the family. And indeed it was as such she was always treated.

The Tates felt themselves greatly in Miss Blodgett's debt for her tireless devotion to Miss Adeline Tate. It was now twenty-seven years since Miss Blodgett had moved into the elegant house in Rattigan Rowe, with her big wicker suitcase and her iron trunk. They didn't know what Miss Adeline Tate would have done without her. Lord Robert, Miss Tate's oldest nephew, expressed the feelings of the whole family one evening after a visit to Rattigan Rowe.

"What a good job it is," said Lord Robert, "that Miss Blodgett is only sixty. She's fairly sure of outlasting Aunt Adeline."

There had been a large family gathering in Rattigan Rowe that afternoon, and some of the family were dining that night with Lord Robert. They all agreed with their host except Honoria Tate, his first cousin, who, being a lady barrister, felt compelled to point out that in that case, instead of Miss Tate,

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they would have Miss Blodgett on their hands.

"Oh, not at all!" said Lord Robert impatiently. "Aunt Adeline will see that Miss Blodgett is well taken care of after her death."

"How?" asked Lucy Tate, Lord Robert's youngest daughter.

"Don't be silly, Lucy dear," said her father. "You know it is understood that Aunt Adeline will make a substantial mention of Miss Blodgett in her will."

"Oh, of course!" murmured Lucy, abashed and blushing. "I had forgotten! The bequest!" For she recalled at once that she had often heard her aunts and uncles mention Miss Blodgett's small bequest. "Dear Aunt Adeline!" she said then, as, with her lovely eyes fixed on the candle flame, she dwelt on Miss Tate's generosity.

Miss Tate was not Lucy's aunt at all, of course. Miss Tate was her grand-aunt, but like all the younger members of the family she had grown into the habit of calling the old lady by the name she heard on the lips of her elders. Miss Tate was Aunt Adeline to all of them. Even Lady Elizabeth's children, who were her great grandchildren, never called her anything but Aunt Adeline.

It was quite disconcerting at times to hear some of the extremely young members of the family calling the old lady by such a familiar name. But then it was even more disconcerting to hear Miss Blodgett calling all the family by their familiar names, although perhaps it was natural enough for her to do so, considering that she knew them all since they were in their cradles, and had dandled them all on her knee, doing so indeed with a great deal more energy than Miss Tate had ever done. Sometimes, indeed, it seemed as if Emma Blodgett had never noticed that they had grown up, and in some cases, even grown old. Lord Robert was always Robbie to Miss Blodgett. The caustic Honoria was still Honey. And I never heard her call Lady Elizabeth Tate-Conyers anything else but Bessie, which was quite startling, for Lady Elizabeth had an extremely distant manner.

The Tates were all somewhat distant in manner. They were an old family, that went back for eleven recorded generations of plain but prosperous people, who had, however, linked themselves all along the way with the best stock in the country. The root was a plain and sturdy-natured growth, but successful grafting had resulted in the frequent breaking out of blossom. The family had rarely failed in any decade to show a famous belle, a great soldier, or a poet. And now, in the last two generations, it seemed that along every branch the whole

tree had burst into fruit and blossom, and whenever there was a family gathering in Aunt Adeline's drawing-room, although there might not be a single outsider present, one was likely nevertheless to find assembled as good an assortment as could be desired of eminent and successful men and women. There were famous surgeons and distinguished statesmen. There were several eminent barristers and judges, some of them, like Lord Robert, having been elevated to the peerage. There were countless churchmen of high dignity. There was an admiral. There was a novelist of established reputation. And it goes without saying that the wives of these men were notable in their own way either for wit or for beauty. As for the very young people, some of them seemed to have put out petals without any exertion at all. Honoria's son was a most flamboyant young poet. One of Harold Tate's sons had already conducted in public a symphony that he had composed at the age of twenty-three. And at seventeen young Lucy Tate was already a beauty. She was one of the most frequently photographed young ladies in society, and there were rumours that made it seem likely she would soon introduce a Prime Minister into these intimate family gatherings.

Yes indeed, when Miss Tate's nephews, nieces, grand-nephews, grand-nieces, and great-grandnephews, came to pay their respects to her on a Sunday afternoon, the drawingroom in Rattigan Rowe was filled with a gallant company, of which the old lady might well be proud.

And Miss Tate was extremely proud of them all. So too was Miss Blodgett. Although, here again, when one saw Miss Blodgett familiarly chaffing with judges and peers, and scolding a bishop for having snuff on his cuff, it was a little surprising to recollect that she had originally joined the Tate household in the humble capacity of seamstress.

The only trace that still remained to indicate Miss Blodgett's original position in the family was that Miss Blodgett herself was never called by her christian name. Miss Tate was the only one who called her Emma. The others delicately shrank from doing so in case it might seem to be taking advantage of her dependence. They felt it better to emphasise the difference between her and Hetty. Hetty was Miss Tate's old maid-servant who had been with the family for fifty years. Hetty was another treasure, but of course she was only a plain servant.

The first day I moved into the house next door to Miss Tate in Rattigan Rowe I found two visiting cards lying in the empty letter-box. On one neat glossy card was engraved the name

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of Miss Adeline Tate. On the other card, which was equally neat, equally white, if perhaps a little thinner, a little less glossy, there was printed the name of Emma Blodgett in neat pen and ink.

That afternoon I saw Miss Tate in her garden. It was some few days before I saw Miss Blodgett.

As a matter of fact I was at first under the mistaken impression that I had seen both Miss Tate and Miss Blodgett, for there had been two old ladies in the garden, and the two old ladies in the garden had been dressed remarkably alike. They both wore long blue silk gowns, with tightly clipped bodices and weighted at the hem with rows and rows of heavy braid. They both wore wide and delightfully dilapidated blue straw hats, wreathed, or overpowered you might say, with large floppy silk flowers shaded from deep rose to pale pink, which the bees, that clouded around them like a nimbus, must have mistaken for real blooms. It is true that one of the old ladies was extremely elegant, and that the other was distinctly shabby, her silk gown having indeed innumerable patches and darns, but nevertheless I think my mistake was pardonable. I might perhaps have guessed that the old heiress would give away her worn gowns to her servant, but how on earth could I have known that Miss Tate's fanatical affection for animals, birds, insects, and even slugs, was so great that on no account would she allow old Hetty to come out into the garden in either her cap or her apron in case their stiff white glare might startle her beloved pets, who wandered about the garden with as much composure as the ladies; the pet dogs, the tabby cats, and the countless tame pigeons. Within doors, with the blue gown hidden under her old-fashioned capacious aprons I would never have mistaken poor old Hetty for Miss Blodgett. Indeed no two people could have been more dissimilar, although as a matter of fact Hetty and Miss Tate were not too unlike at all. Both were small and frail, but at the same time agile and keen. And in Hetty's face, as well as in Miss Tate's face, where the flesh had thinned away with the years, the bone was seen to be fine and well chiselled. Miss Tate's face had, of course, the more delicate outline. Her bone structure was faultless, and such as a young man would do well to try to discern under the bloom and curve of any young woman with whom he thought of spending a lifetime.

It was a pity that Miss Tate had never married. It was a pity she should have thought fit to discontinue the work of eleven generations, for there could be no doubt, I think, that this charming old figurine was the result of careful selection

and breeding. And yet, it was surprising to see how a generation or two of poverty and privation could also refine the bone for there was undoubtedly something attractive and endearing in old Hetty's clear and angular face. Still, no matter what is said, it was stupid of me to have mistaken her for Miss Blodgett. And when I saw Miss Blodgett go down the steps into the garden a few days later, it was immediately clear that Hetty was no more than a servant.

"Hetty," called out Miss Blodgett, "I forgot my sunshade. Run into the house and get it for me."

And when Hetty, who had been putting some seedlings into the ground for Miss Tate, stood up to do the message, she lowered her eyes deferentially while Miss Blodgett sailed past.

There could be no mistake this time. This could be no other than Miss Blodgett. Why! No one else would have scolded Miss Tate in such a friendly and familiar manner.

Emma Blodgett wagged her finger at Miss Tate.

"Not so much bending!" she cried. "Not so much bending!" And drawing up a garden seat, she called Hetty, who had returned with the sunshade, to send her into the potting-shed for an iron foot-rest. "The grass is so damp in a garden," she said, as she settled herself plumply down to watch Miss Tate and Hetty continue their work with the seedlings.

Miss Blodgett was a big woman. She had a soft, warm, friendly face; a very nice person, one would say unhesitatingly, but rather dull, perhaps even stupid. She was only about sixty; much younger than Miss Tate, much younger even than Hetty, but less active. Her round plump face was perpetually flushed. She had a mass of grey hair, strong, straight and unruly. Her figure was stout too, and she had a surprisingly matronly bosom for a spinster of her years.

Miss Blodgett wore blue also. As a matter of fact she too was dressed somewhat similarly to Miss Tate and yet there was some very great difference which even I, from my study window, could see but could not at once define. First I thought it was a matter of length for although, like Miss Tate, Miss Blodgett wore her skirts longer than was fashionable, they were not as long as Miss Tate's. Whatever impulse made her disregard fashion had not been as strong as the old lady's, and was probably only imitation of her, for where Miss Tate's long blue silk hemline hung down to hide her ankles, Miss Blodgett's stopped short a cowardly inch or two up from the ground, and revealed a pair of plump ankles with a tendency to swell, and possibly some other weakness as well, because Miss Blodgett

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wore thick blue woollen stockings even at this, the hottest time of the year. It was impossible to tell what kind of stockings Miss Tate wore; no one ever saw Miss Tate's little ankles. But to go back to Miss Blodgett's dress again, as I said, I thought at first it differed only in length from Miss Tate's blue gown. Then I thought I detected a slight difference in the shade. Still later I decided it was a matter of age, but I soon dismissed that idea because Hetty's gown, although so tattered and shabby, was in other respects exactly like Miss Tate's new gown. It was not, however, until the first day I went to take tea with the ladies that I discovered the difference between the three blue gowns. It was simply this: that Miss Blodgett's gown did not rustle! You know what that meant. It was blue. It was silky. It was cut to much the same pattern as the gown Miss Tate wore. But it didn't rustle. In other words it was not quite the same quality. It was not the genuine thing. And of course Miss Blodgett did not realise this at all.

"Look at Miss Tate," she said to me, one day, after we had become familiar over many cups of tea in their house and in mine. "Look at Miss Tate! She pays twice what I pay for the material in her gowns, and mine is just exactly the same. No one could tell the difference. But the shopkeepers impose on Miss Tate. They know she has plenty of money. They don't impose on me! I'm well able for them!" And having triumphantly said this, Miss Blodgett begged me to have more cake, and as she went over to the table, I heard the slight creaking sound of the artificial silk fabric; while at the next moment Miss Tate delicately rustled across the room to me. And indeed, as my ear caught that rustle, which was as faint as a sigh, at the same time, in the far corner of the room where Hetty was pouring out tea, I caught another rustle that was fainter still. And if the rustle in Miss Tate's gown was like a sigh, the rustle that came from under Hetty's voluminous white apron was like the echo of a sigh.

I became very friendly with the ladies in the house next door, but long before I met them I had become extraordinarily familiar with the sight of Hetty and Miss Tate in the garden.

The gardens of the houses in Rattigan Rowe were large and secluded for city gardens. They were separated from each other by solid high walls of beautifully cut granite, on which stonecrop and red valerian flowered freely. But from the upper windows of the houses the gardens were not so secluded, and from my study at the back of the house in the second storey I could see into every nook and cranny of my neighbour's

gardens. The best comment I can make upon Miss Tate's garden is that from the first day I looked down into it I never bothered to look into the other gardens in the Rowe. They, like my own, were plain city gardens, with a plot of grass at the top and a few apple trees at the end. But Miss Tate's garden—well, I was hardly a day in Rattigan Rowe when I realised I would have to change my study to the front of the house if I was ever to do any work. It was the most distracting garden I had ever seen.

In the first place, it was almost entirely given over to the old lady's pets, and everywhere on the small plot of lawn near the house, upon the grass and upon the green metal seats, and even raised on specially constructed standards, there were bowls of water of all shapes and sizes, wide and narrow, deep and shallow, to facilitate the different needs of bird and beast and butterfly. And although to either side of the grass plot, there were small flower beds, in them there bloomed only a few of those fragrant old flowers that were fashionable when Miss Tate was a girl; musk roses, heliotrope, lavender, and clove carnations, and a few other flowers of unpretentious aspect, whose names I did not know, but which I afterwards found out were grown specially for the bees and the butterflies; and yes, I forgot, there was a giant clump of catmint in the corner under my window which was grown specially for the tabby cats.

This grass plot with its border of flowers was, however, only one small fraction of the garden. The rest of it was planted all over with small flowering trees in which the birds and bees kept up a continual orchestration, the bees and pigeons supplying the low bass undertones, the blackbirds and thrushes breaking the hum with high trebles. These flowering trees, although they were fully matured, were of such a nature that, although as old as Miss Tate, they were, like her, frail and delicate even in their age. And in comparison with the plain old trees in the public park beyond the lane at the back of our gardens, they looked like mere branches stuck into the ground and tied all over with paper flowers, some pink, some yellow, some blue.

Viewed from my study window indeed the whole of Miss Tate's garden looked as unreal, but as entrancing as the miniature gardens that children used to construct long ago in shallow saucers, and which they were taught to call Japanese gardens, and which, when they were made, tantalised them with a longing to be small enough to wander in them.

Watching Miss Tate and Hetty wandering in their dreamy

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unreal garden, under the small flower-trees, I was often tantalised myself with a desire to throw down my book and join them under those bloom-laden branches that seemed to be continually shedding either petals or fragrance, or fragments of bird-song.

It was at night, however, that Miss Tate's garden was most tantalisingly beautiful. Then, the moon shone down in misty brightness over it, leaving the dark depths undisturbed and mysterious as the cold sea, but washing the tops of the small trees with light, and striking gleams from the glossy leaves as gleams are struck from the pointed wave. And in the middle of this misty moonlit sea the small white-painted glasshouse with its pointed roof seemed to float through the night like a silver barque of romance.

If ever a house were the harbour of happiness, it should surely be the house looking over that blossom-tossed garden. Yet, the first day I ever set foot in it, I felt there was something wrong. There was some uneasiness in the house. There was some slight strain between Miss Tate and Miss Blodgett. But what it could be was impossible to imagine, for seldom had two people more to give each other. On the one hand Miss Tate gave Miss Blodgett not only a home, but a beautiful home, not only a salary, but a bountiful one. And, as well as that, there was this understanding about the small bequest. Miss Blodgett, on the other hand, was a perfect companion for Miss Tate. She not only ran the house, and supervised Hetty, but she had, it appeared, no friends or relatives at all of her own, and so even such time as she was supposed to have free for her own purposes, was lavished also on Miss Tate, and occupied in doing errands and messages in town for her. In short, Miss Tate gave Miss Blodgett a share in everything she possessed and made no distinction whatsoever between them, and Miss Blodgett, although she could only give Miss Tate her time and her attention and her care, gave them without stint and kept back not one bit for personal use.

Yet, as I say, I felt there was something uneasy in their relationship. I felt it instinctively on the first day I took tea with the ladies, but I could not name it nor trace it to any cause.

I was soon an habitual visitor in the house next door, but still never a visit passed, however happily and pleasantly, without my getting, at some time or another, a feeling that all was not well. At some time or another I would see a little arrow in Miss Tate's blue eyes, and something sharp would shoot through the air.

At first I merely felt the vibration it left in the air. But then one day I actually saw it flash out; a little silver arrow of dissatisfaction. I saw it flash out, yes, but I was not wiser afterwards. I still could see no cause for the old lady's sharpness, and when, afterwards, I pieced together the conversation of that visit a more innocuous conversation could not be imagined. There wasn't a single remark in it that could have rasped anyone's nerves as far as I could see. And Miss Blodgett, who was picking up some dropped stitches, had contributed to it only by smiles and nods or at most, I am almost sure, a single remark. Yet it was at Miss Blodgett that the arrow had been aimed.

There was only one grandchild to tea that day; Honoria's eldest girl, Martha, one of the quietest of the family, a bit dull you might even say. Whenever Martha was there the conversation was always somewhat slow. The two ladies knitted, and the talk never ventured much beyond worsted and yarn. It is hard to recall an insipid conversation. But I took pains to recall every word in order to see why that little silver arrow had been sped from the bow.

Tea was over and Hetty was clearing it away.

"That's pretty wool, Aunt Adeline," said Martha, looking at the candy pink wool that Miss Tate was knitting.

"You saw it the last time you were here," said Miss Tate.

"Did I? Are you sure, Aunt Adeline? I thought you were knitting something with blue wool the last time."

"It's two years since I knit anything in blue wool," said Miss Tate. "The last thing I knit in blue wool was a scarf for your brother, Edward."

"Oh, but this was only the other day, Aunt Adeline," said poor Martha, "and it wasn't a scarf for Edward, it was a shawl for Miriam's child."

Miss Tate looked up, and so did Miss Blodgett.

"This is the shawl," the two ladies said, speaking at the same time, and then Miss Tate said that she had been working at it for the last six weeks. "I'll never make a shawl again," she said; "it's so tiresome."

Poor Martha put out her hand and drew over a corner of the pink knitted shawl.

"Such an intricate pattern," she said. "You have wonderful patience, Aunt Adeline."

At this point, I remember it all exactly, Miss Tate dropped a stitch, and while she was trying to take it up she did not catch Martha's last remark.

"What did you say, Martha dear?" she said, when the stitch

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was safe on the needle again.

"I said you have wonderful patience, Aunt Adeline," said poor Martha the second time.

But Aunt Adeline did not hear it the second time either. Now Aunt Adeline was not deaf, but she was decidedly nervous in case she might get deaf, and always if she failed to catch something that was said for any reason whatever, whether it was due to a noise in the room or an indistinctness in the part of the person who spoke, or, as in this case, because she just wasn't listening, she was always flurried, and it usually resulted in the remark having to be repeated several times after that before she caught it. It was nervousness, nothing else. I often noticed that on such occasions Miss Blodgett was invaluable, either repeating what had been said calmly and clearly, or better still diverting Miss Tate's attention to something else so that she forgot that she had missed hearing something. But on this occasion when Miss Blodgett came to the rescue, in my ignorance I thought it was her interference that annoyed Miss Tate, for it was right after Miss Blodgett spoke that I saw the arrow.

"Martha said you have wonderful patience, Aunt Adeline," said Miss Blodgett kindly, and she was just putting out her hand to fix a cushion that had slipped out of place on Miss Tate's chair when Miss Tate let loose the arrow.

"All old people are patient!" snapped Miss Tate. "But the Tate's were never patient before ninety."

Poor Martha blushed. But it was not at Martha the arrow was aimed. It was at Miss Blodgett. I saw it. I saw it go out, aimed straight for Miss Blodgett's heart. But somehow it missed its aim. Miss Blodgett sat knitting as placidly as ever, smiling, and nodding her head in rhythm with the clicking knitting needles. Perhaps the arrow hit and splintered against the large cameo brooch that rose and fell on her big bosom. I don't know. Martha, however, was upset. She was not quick enough to see the arrow, but she was not dull enough to be unaware that something was amiss. She thought, poor girl, that she was at fault, that she had said something to offend Miss Tate. Her eyes filled with tears.

Miss Tate saw the tears. She understood at once what had happened. I saw her give an angry look at Miss Blodgett's cameo brooch and then she turned around with a gracious smile to Martha.

"Come and we will go into the garden, Martha my dear," she said. "Give me your arm. I must get a rose for my favourite grandniece." The old lady was her gracious, sweet

self again. Over me too she shed her graciousness. "Will you come with us," she asked, turning to me, "and I'll get one for you too." But at the door the old lady paused. "Martha is like all the Tates," she said. "She loves flowers." And then, turning around again sharply, she nodded at Miss Blodgett who had gone over to the window and was sitting with her back to us. "Miss Blodgett wouldn't know a cauliflower from a rose," she said, and in an instant another little arrow whizzed through the air.

But Miss Blodgett smiled. Miss Blodgett did not feel any prick this time either. Before she turned around to answer I saw that her dress was fastened up the back with a little row of white pearl buttons. I was not near enough to see if one of them was scratched or broken, but I think it could hardly have been otherwise.

Miss Blodgett smiled when she turned around.

"I wouldn't mind gardens," she said complacently, "but there are so many unpleasant things in them; bees and wasps, and ants and slugs. I'm quite satisfied to sit here at the window and get the sun through the glass." And turning her chair around again to the window, she went on with her knitting.

Miss Tate took Martha's arm and my arm, and we went out gossiping lightly, Miss Tate making an unusual fuss over Martha all the time, picking her the best and most beautiful roses, and several times asking me if I saw any likeness between them.

She was determined to be charming. She insisted on giving me a bouquet too, and as she pressed the bunch of red roses into my hand I felt that this charming old lady may have known that I saw that arrow whizzing through the air, and wanted to divert my mind from what I had seen. In fact when I was leaving, she kept me standing at the small green gate at the end of the garden telling me how good Miss Blodgett was to her, and how much she was indebted to her dear companion.

"She has a kind heart," said Miss Tate. "Not like the Tates. The Tates all have a bitter streak in them." She smiled at me then, and she smiled at Martha. But Martha protested.

"Oh, Aunt Adeline! you're very naughty! Such a thing

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to say about us!" said poor Martha, who was destined to be again the cause of trouble.

For just then Miss Blodgett came to the steps leading down to the garden and overhearing Martha's remark, she smiled at her with her wide benevolent smile.

"Did I hear you say Aunt Adeline was naughty, Martha?" she asked, and before she said another word, there in the brilliant sunny air, with the birds singing and the bees humming from flower to flower, Miss Tate let fly a third and dreadfully sharp little arrow.

What was the meaning of it at all? I hugged my roses tightly, said goodbye and went into my own garden greatly perplexed.

After that I saw the arrow several times, but only when I was near at hand.

At other times I would sit in my window and look down at Miss Tate and Hetty in the garden and think how gentle and sweet Miss Tate looked. And even when Miss Blodgett came out, the two old ladies took tea together under the trees, there seemed to be tranquillity, and they presented a charming picture of peace and happiness and sweetness. They would sip tea, the two of them, and Miss Tate would, perhaps, call Hetty and pour out a cup of tea for her, and insist on the old servant drinking it there and then, standing beside them at the tea-table with perhaps one of the lap-dogs she had been combing caught up under her arm, or a bundle of weeds that she was going to burn at the bottom of the plot. On those occasions I saw no arrows.

Yet as surely as I went to tea with the old ladies a little slender arrow would pierce the air, and make straight for Miss Blodgett's heart.

I pondered a great deal over the whole thing. At first I thought there was some deep and serious reason for Miss Tate's antagonism to Emma Blodgett. Then a small incident occurred to make me veer around to quite the opposite opinion, and decide that it was something very trivial that was getting on the old lady's nerves, and that it was another case of the Princess and the Pea.

I had not called on the ladies for some days and this afternoon I went to the green garden gate and pushed it open to pay them a short visit. They were going to take tea in the garden and Hetty had just laid the tray on the wicker garden-table. When I walked over the grass the old ladies were

pulling their chairs over to the table, and Miss Blodgett relieved Miss Tate of a large catalogue at which they had both been looking. She threw it down on the grass underneath the table.

"Hetty, another cup!" said Miss Blodgett, and Miss Tate put one of the tabby cats down from his chair and invited me to take his place. Then as Hetty brought out the other cup and turned to go back into the house, Miss Tate called her again.

"Hetty," she said, "I want you to put on your hat and coat and go down to the hospital to ask how Mr. Robby's baby is getting on to-day."

"Is the baby sick?" I cried. "In hospital, did you say?"

Lord Robert's son and namesake, young Robbie, had recently married and there had been great excitement at the birth of his first son, Lord Robert's grandson, and another great-grand-nephew for Miss Adeline Tate. I felt very bad at hearing it was not doing well.

"The doctor says he won't live," said Miss Tate, when I begged her again to tell me what was the matter with it. "There's something the matter with its spine," she said. "It was weakly from the start."

"Oh dear," I said, and I looked at them both. Miss Blodgett sighed sadly.

I felt uncomfortable.

"Perhaps if I hadn't come you would be going to the hospital to see it?" I said, rising from my chair. "Please don't let me intrude. I only called for a minute. I'll call again another day."

But the two old ladies excelled each other in assuring me that I must on no account leave them. Miss Blodgett rose to press me down into my chair again, while Miss Tate insisted over and over again that a few minutes before I appeared they were planning to send Hetty out with a note asking me to call.

"Because we just got a present of some rose geranium jelly that we want you to sample with us," said Miss Tate. "Sit down! Sit down!" And they began to pour out three cups of tea and take the cover from the geranium jelly that its fragrance might tempt me to stay.

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I stayed, but I was uneasy waiting for Hetty to come back. She was a long time away. In fact she did not come back until I was going. I was letting myself out by the front door when

I met Hetty in the hall.

I looked enquiringly at her.

"Is it better?" I asked eagerly.

Hetty was calm,

"No," she said, "but it was a good job I went up there. It's dead," and with a remarkable compromise between deference and impatience, she prepared to pass me. "I must tell Miss Tate," she said.

I was confused. I tried to detain her. Surely she was not going to rush out and tell them the news bluntly, like that?

"Hetty, wait," I cried. "Are you going to tell them at once?"

Hetty looked surprised.

"What else would I do?" she asked.

"Don't you think if you waited a little while, and broke it gently to them?" I stumbled with my words. Had Hetty nonsense? Couldn't she see what I meant? "If you said it was worse, and then later on you could say it wasn't expected to live and then perhaps they might be prepared for the shock, and you could tell them the truth?"

But Hetty stared at me. "What about the wreath?" she asked.

"The wreath?" I repeated.

"Yes," said Hetty. "Miss Tate will want to order it at once. She'll want time to decide on what flowers to have put in it. She'd be most annoyed if she wasn't told in time." Hetty looked at me, and then taking into consideration that I was after all a comparative stranger, she paused to give me an impatient explanation. "Miss Tate always sends a magnificent wreath to any funeral inside the family," she said.

And with this Hetty hurried away. I stood uncertainly looking after her. I saw her run down the steps into the garden. I saw her go across the grass and I saw the ladies look up expectantly. I saw Hetty say something to them and make an energetic gesture.

I waited. In spite of what Hetty said, I felt I might be

needed. And I was on the point of turning around and going back to the garden anyway, when I saw the two ladies rise excitedly to their feet. And in the soft summer air Miss Tate's voice carried in to me distinctly.

"The wreath!" she said. "Quick! Where is the catalogue?" and they hastily pushed aside the tea table and picked up the catalogue from the grass; the catalogue that they had been scanning when I went in. It was a florist's catalogue, and even at such a distance I could see the illustrations of wreaths and artificial bouquets, flowering crosses, and glass domed immortelles. "Give it to me," said Miss Tate, putting on her glasses and stretching out her hand for the catalogue.

"Wait a minute," said Miss Blodgett withholding it. "We marked a pretty one, don't you remember?"

I didn't wait to hear any more. I could see why it had not occurred to Hetty to break the news to them. The old ladies had long since passed into that phase of age when they were no longer capable of feeling the great emotions; like children their joys and sorrows were as real as other people's, but they were inspired by smaller things.

I stood looking out at them in their sunny garden for a few minutes longer, and as I did the thought occurred to me that whatever discord there was between them sprang from something trivial and small. I decided to put it out of my mind, and not to let it bother me further.

This, however, it was impossible to do for long. I never went in to the house next door without feeling the familiar quiver in the air. The room might be filled with nieces and nephews. The talk might be gay and general and happy. But at some time or another I would see the little arrow in Miss Tate's eye. And at the most unexpected moment she would let it fly. Perhaps one of the young people would call something to her across the room and Miss Tate, talking to another member of the family, would not hear.

"Aunt Adeline!" the young thing would call out again; and then Miss Blodgett would step in.

"Aunt Adeline! Aunt Adeline! Lucy is calling you."

Miss Tate would look up. She never failed to hear Miss Blodgett. And inexplicably, then, she would let fly the little arrow.

"I hear! I hear!" Miss Tate would say. "It's nothing

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important, I suppose!" and she would glance very fiercely at Miss Blodgett. But to the young thing who had called her she would cross the room courteously and, sitting down beside her, would listen to all she had to say.

This, as a matter of fact, was a common scene, but one day when the drawingroom was crowded with a great many of the Tates, and their husbands and wives and betrothed, including indeed Lucy's Prime Minister, there was a slight difference in the scene, although it began in the same way, and it was Lucy who called out to her grand-aunt and Miss Blodgett who drew Miss Tate's attention to her. But this day, Miss Tate, who had been sitting beside me, stood up and I positively trembled. I felt that she was going to let loose a whole quiverful of arrows, so fierce did a strange light shine in her eye.

"Aunt Adeline! Lucy is calling you."

That was all Miss Blodgett said; but Miss Tate shot a fierce glance at her and turned around to Lucy, almost as crossly.

"I can't come now, my dear," she said, and she turned to indicate me, as I sat behind her on the sofa. "I just promised our neighbour here that I would show her the family photographs."

I felt more uneasy than ever. This was the first I had heard of the promise. I saw too that Lucy was crestfallen at the snub she had got in front of the Prime Minister. But Miss Tate was inexorable. She moved over to the mantelpiece on which there were set out anything from twenty to thirty photographs in silver and filigree frames, showing a bewildering array of old ladies and young, of bearded men and men so young they were like young girls. There were small girls in frilly dresses and little boys in velvet suits and little boys in sailor suits. There were brides without number, in silks and lace. There were at least six men in uniform. There was Lord Robert in his wig, Lucy in a ball dress, Honoria in her college gown—but simpler to say who was absent than who was present in this crowded silver gallery on the mantelpiece. Miss Tate beckoned me to follow her and took up the frame nearest to hand.

"This was my mother," she said, pushing the silver frame into my hand, but I had hardly time to glance at it when it was snatched away and another pushed into my hand. "That was a grand-uncle," she said, and she nodded back at the young people. "He would be the children's great-great-granduncle." She snatched back the great-granduncle. "This is a nephew,"

she said. "He was killed playing polo."

And then, one after another, she rammed the silver frames into my hands, and snatched them away again almost as quickly, so that I had hardly time to do more than glimpse the merest details of them. At first I strove to keep pace with her; tried to exclaim that the old ladies were charming, the young officers handsome and the soldiers fearless and brave. But as she rammed the cold frames into my hands and snatched them away again I became aware that behind this sudden plan of showing me the photographs there was some motive other than the stimulation of my interest!

At last she had come to the end of them.

"Well?" she said in a loud voice, and I saw her look all around the room. She wanted everyone to hear.

"Well?" she said, "What do you think of that for a family."

I murmured something which I hoped was appropriate, but hoped still more would be indistinct.

"What did you say?" said Miss Tate inexorably, bending her head to indicate that I should repeat my remark.

"They all have remarkably fine faces," I said, awkwardly. It was true, but I felt awkward saying it out aloud. It's bad enough to praise a person to his face, but this was as good as praising twenty or thirty people to their faces.

"But didn't you notice anything," asked Miss Tate. And then I knew that it was not my comment she wanted but an opportunity to make one of her own. "Didn't you notice how strong the likeness is all down the line?" She turned back and took down the great-grand-uncle again. "The Tates all had aquiline noses," she said. "All the dead Tates had them; all the living Tates have them." I looked around nervously, and true enough, although I had not paid much attention to it before, there were a large number of noses in the room, all of an aquiline shape. Miss Tate had snatched up another frame. "Look at great uncle Samuel's nose!" she snatched up another. "Look at this nose. Look at that nose!" and then, leaving down the last frame so carelessly, the young man in uniform who was looking out from it over his aquiline nose, fell flat on his face on the marble slab, Miss Tate held up her little head. "Look at my nose!" she said triumphantly. Then in still a louder, clearer voice, that had by now caught the attention of the whole room and particularly caught the attention of the Prime Minister, in whose direction I thought she inclined it particularly, the old lady repeated her first statement. "Yes, the Tates all have aquiline noses," she said.

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"And the men are all tall, and the women are all small. And,"—here Miss Tate drew a deep breath—"we were always noted for our ankles." The old lady turned around swiftly to Lucy. "Look at Lucy," she said. "Pull up your skirt, Lucy, and show your ankles." She turned around. "Look at Martha!" she said. "Martha, why do you wear such dark stockings. It's a shame. Dark stockings are all right for people with clumsy feet." And then to my astonishment, Miss Tate's little hand swooped downward and lifted the hem of her own blue gown. "In my day," she said, "we might as well have had no legs at all, but I have the Tate ankles too. Noses and ankles: that's how you can tell the real Tates!"

And then, as she said this, Miss Tate turned around deliberately and looked directly at Miss Blodgett, and distinctly, as on the other occasions, I saw it flash out, the little silver arrow of hate. And where did it fly? It flew straight for the spot where Miss Blodgett sat smiling complacently upon all the company, and it was aimed, of all places, at a point just below the hemline of the blue gown of imitation silk where Emma's fat ankles were complacently crossed one over the other in their thick, ribbed, blue woollen stockings.

And all at once I understood.

And I think that Lucy, who was a sensitive girl, might have understood too, for she gave an embarrassed laugh.

"I'm afraid you're as vain as a young girl, Aunt Adeline!" she said.

But Miss Blodgett did not betray the slightest upset. Was it that those thick ribbed stockings, like the cameo brooch, were impenetrable to the pricks of the most ardent arrows? For Miss Blodgett smiled on us all again, and laughed heartily.

"That's good," she said. "Did you hear what Lucy said?" she cried, poking Miss Tate with the end of her knitting needle. "You're as vain as a girl, Aunt Adeline."

Aunt Adeline!

There they were, the simple words that had occurred in all the simple sentences I had analysed so unsuccessfully in my effort to find out what was poisoning Miss Tate against Miss Blodgett.

Aunt Adeline. Aunt Adeline. I recalled at once how these words had occurred on every occasion just before the venomous arrow was let fly from the bow. Everything that Miss Tate possessed in the world was at the disposal of Miss Blodgett, except one thing—the family blood. Miss Blodgett had no drop of it and without it, and without the Tate nose and the Tate

ankles, she was guilty of a grievous lapse every time she called Miss Tate by the familiar name reserved for the use of the Lucys and Robbies.

I felt an instant pang of apprehension in my heart. I instantly recalled the gossip I had heard about the small bequest. What if Miss Blodgett should jeopardise her chance of it? What if she should forfeit it?

I positively trembled. Why, Miss Blodgett was so much a part of the family that most of her salary, lavish as it was, went in buying worsted for the bonnets and shawls she was continually knitting for the Tate progeny, and in small but frequent purchases of confetti and ribbons, and good luck tokens for the numerous Tate brides. Why! I thought in panic, what a lot of money she must have spent if it was on nothing more than wreaths for the Tate corpses. Why! Miss Blodgett could hardly have saved a penny. She would be absolutely dependent on that small bequest.

Really, I felt so bad I took my leave shortly afterwards. Later, I heard that Lucy Tate left early also, but perhaps the Prime Minister was taking her out to dinner. And all that week the affair preyed on my mind. I began to dread going into that house. For every time that Miss Blodgett addressed Miss Tate as Aunt Adeline, I felt my heart freeze. Every time she said it I felt the small bequest was more and more in jeopardy.

And so, when, at the end of the summer I began to get ready for spending the winter in the south of England as was my custom, I felt a certain relief as I went out to say goodbye to the ladies. They came to the door to wave me out of sight. Miss Blodgett had tears in her eyes. As I went down the steps from the hall-door she linked her arm in Miss Tate's arm and called out after me.

"Aunt Adeline will miss you? Won't you, Aunt Adeline?"

Those were her last words to me before I set out. I didn't dare turn round. I simply could not bear to see that little silver arrow.

The following Spring when I came back, the house next door was boarded up for sale. A few forlorn pigeons hovered uncertainly on the eave shoot. A stray cat or two slunk in and out between the railings. They were not the regular pets belonging to the house, but it was clear they had had claims on its hospitality and could not realise their claim had ceased.

Miss Tate was dead.

There was no sign whatever of Miss Blodgett.

About a week after my return, however, one day as I was

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walking into town I took a short cut through those dreary intermediary streets that lie between the business section and the residential areas like Rattigan Rowe, but which have not yet degenerated into slums. Here fine old houses that had once been fashionable residences stood forlorn, bereft of their elegant curtains and their gay window boxes; their elaborate brass knockers painted black to save labour. The particular street through which I passed had been saved from complete degeneration by reason of the fact that several of the houses had been turned into offices and service flats, and the few that had remained in private hands had been retained by their owners at the cost of turning them into boarding houses.

And coming down the steps of one of the most precarious and ramshackle of these boarding-houses, who should I see but Emma Blodgett.

Dear Miss Blodgett! How glad I was to see her! I waved to her and hurried across the street, with both hands outstretched. But even before I reached the other side I saw with a sinking of the heart that, although only a few short months had passed since I had last seen her, Miss Blodgett was decidedly shabbier in her appearance. Her clothes were as clean and neat as ever; but she no longer had that sheltered look that all Miss Tate's household had had last summer from Miss Tate herself down even to the fat cats and the fat pigeons. Indeed, Miss Blodgett, at that moment, reminded me of the poor perplexed pigeons that I had seen clinging to the eaves in Rattigan Rowe.

But of course I did not pretend to notice any change, although I felt dreadfully upset about the poor thing, and feared that my worst forebodings about the bequest had been true. And yet somehow it did not seem like Miss Tate, dead or alive, to take such a simple, petty revenge. I found it hard to think she would have omitted Miss Blodgett's name from her testament when it was, as it were, an understood thing that it would be included.

"Dear Miss Blodgett!" I cried, and I sympathised with her for the loss of Miss Tate. And yet I felt a necessity to be guarded in my condolences. "So poor Miss Tate has left her garden," I said, and I watched Miss Blodgett carefully as I said it.

Emma Blodgett's eyes filled with tears.

"Yes, she said. "Poor Aunt Adeline!" and then she took out a small handkerchief, that was not, alas, as spotlessly laundered as it might have been last year, but which, from the

border of real lace that ran delicately around its hem, I saw was undoubtedly one of the small treasures that Miss Blodgett had amassed in her years at Rattigan Rowe. "Yes," she said, and she blew her nose, and there was no mistaking her sorrow.

I felt very much better. I felt I had been unjust to the memory of Miss Tate. Miss Blodgett's shabby appearance was due, no doubt, to the fact that she now had to be more prudent. She was living her own life now, and not the life of an heiress, and I reflected briefly on how quickly we revert to our own instinctive natures when we are left alone. How often had I noticed that servant girls who were the most perfect creatures, fastidious and neat and orderly, while in my employment, when once they left me to get married and settled down in their own homes became at once unkempt and untidy, disorderly and dirty, and ran their houses as wretchedly as the most untrained and unskilled slatterns. And after all, Miss Blodgett, although for twenty years she had lived on terms of christian names with an earl, and dandled the daughters of baronets and statesmen, had come originally from humble stock. And wasn't she justified in her prudence? Wasn't thrift a virtue when you were poor? And when you had no home, but had to pay for every morsel you eat, and for the roof over your head, could you afford to be too prodigal with your money?

And then, all those years when there had been talk and gossip about the bequest that Miss Tate was expected to leave her companion, had it not always been particularly stated that it would be a small bequest? Why!—another aspect of the situation struck me. Goodness knows how small it might not have been. It might have been a mere nothing; a paltry sum. Then a worse thought struck me! Perhaps it had not been money at all. How often have old ladies and gentlemen of eighty or ninety set such a value on their own possessions that they have carelessly disposed of their impersonal millions at the advice of lawyer or vicar, to lavish all their attention on the disposal into what they considered proper and grateful hands, of some worthless little trinket, a lock of hair or an old bible, because on it they had, in those last sad hours of abnegation, set more value than upon all their millions; some worthless object in which they felt they had distilled the essence of a life, and which they were loathest to leave behind them, but, which unfortunately was of no more value than a stone, and was, like a stone alas, not negotiable.

I looked hurriedly at Miss Blodgett, who was indeed weeping

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copiously now, as between sobs she described Miss Tate's last hours to me.

"I was with her at the last breath," she said, and here she sobbed again. "I held her hand all the time. She clutched my fingers till the very end."

At this point Miss Blodgett put out her hand and clasped mine in illustration of that last touching scene, but as she did so she was recalled swiftly from the bedside of her dead friend as her eye, and mine, caught sight of the large hole on a finger of her glove. The third finger of her right hand protruded impudently from a hole in the tip of that well-washed doe-skin glove. Miss Blodgett hurriedly withdrew her hand.

"Oh, she cried, "I must have caught my glove in something. It seems to be torn."

But the tear was not a new one. It had a jagged and frayed edge that told its own story. And irresistibly my eye travelled to Miss Blodgett's other hand. In the left glove there was another and slightly larger hole, and out through it came another finger, which, alas, was not as immaculate as one would have expected. The finger nail was indeed decidedly grimy, and showed that Miss Blodgett's landlady evidently allowed her paying guest the privilege of doing out her own room, and blacking her own firegrate.

I looked away hurriedly. But you know how it is? The eye is a most unruly member. Do what I might it would rove back irresistibly to the hole in Miss Blodgett's glove, and where my eye went, irresistibly it seemed Miss Blodgett's blue eye followed.

At last I must either go away or one of us must lay the ghost of that torn glove that hovered between us interrupting our conversation, making us awkward and ill at ease. Miss Blodgett laid it,

"Poor Miss Tate," she said suddenly, and she held out her hand frankly and displayed not only the torn tips of the gloves, but the fact that the palms of both gloves were worn so thin that her pink flesh showed through them. "Poor Miss Tate. How distressed she would be if she saw me looking so shabby!"

I didn't quite know what to say, but remembering that Emma Blodgett was so friendless and isolated, with no one

perhaps in the whole world to take an interest in her, I felt that I could venture a step further without any danger of being thought vulgarly curious.

"I hope her death has not caused too great a change in your circumstances," I said, and then feeling that I had not handled the situation very well, I ran on impulsively. "I mean," I cried, "we always understood that Miss Tate intended to arrange matters so that you should never want for anything after her death. You know what I mean," I cried. "The small bequest!"

I spoke hurriedly with my eyes on the ground. I was afraid to look up. But Miss Blodgett had dissolved into tears again, and again they were tears of love, and affection.

"Poor Aunt Adeline!" she said. "A small bequest! That was so like her, to underestimate every impulse of her dear, kind heart." She looked at me a little sternly. "You wouldn't call a thousand pounds a small bequest, would you?" she asked.

I was astonished; astonished. I had never thought how much Miss Tate was likely to leave her companion, but I must admit I had hardly expected it to be more than a few hundreds.

"Oh, Miss Blodgett," I said, putting out my hand again and taking hers, "I congratulate you!" But what, I wondered, was the mystery of the broken gloves?

Miss Blodgett withdrew her hand quickly.

"Congratulate me?" she asked. "Sympathise with me, you mean. There's nothing to congratulate me about. You see I didn't get the money. And what is more, it looks as if I'm never going to get it."

"What?" I was bewildered; up one minute and down the next. Surely none of the noble and wealthy Tates were going to contest this reasonable if generous bequest? Considering how much they must have shared among themselves, the size of this bequest, if its size had surprised them, should have added to the family pride in its own magnanimity. Lucy, at least I thought, must have rejoiced, if I read aright the apprehension in her eye that day last summer. "Surely they're not going to contest the will?" I cried.

"Oh, dear no," cried Miss Blodgett. "They feel worse than I do. In fact, Lord Robert is doing all in his power for me. He insisted on my getting the best solicitor I could get, and

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Miss Lucy Tate couldn't be surpassed for her kindness. They are all, all so kind, and so upset on my account. The Tates are like that you know! They are the kindest people in the world. They think of me as one of themselves." She sighed. "And poor Aunt Adeline!" she said. "She was the kindest of them all. Indeed I can only hope she is not looking down now and seeing all the trouble she caused, without realising it, out of the goodness of her heart. For you see," said Miss Blodgett, and she looked up at me earnestly, "it was because she was trying to be too kind to me that I lost the legacy."

I didn't understand. I didn't pretend to understand.

"Well, you know," said Miss Blodgett, "you know the way she always considered me one of the family. You know how I used to call her Aunt Adeline, just as if I was related to her in blood? You know all that, don't you? You could see it for yourself?"

Miss Blodgett looked at me earnestly with her big obtuse face and her big stupid eyes filled with love and affection. I felt a great uneasiness gather again in my heart.

I didn't answer, but there was no need, for Miss Blodgett went on.

"Well!" she said. "Poor Miss Tate, when she drew up her will, put in a few words as a last message to me. She wanted to let me see my place in her affections. She wanted to let me see how she considered me so close to her. And so," here poor Miss Blodgett forgot for a moment about Miss Tate as she was recalled to the dreadful weeks that had passed, spent mostly in a solicitor's office, being questioned and brow-beaten, and for a moment she broke down and her poor lower lip fell open and a tear, that was not for Miss Adeline Tate, but for poor Emma Blodgett, stole down her fat red cheek. "And so," she said, "in the will, Miss Tate designated me as her fond niece, Emma. 'And to my fond niece, Emma,' she said, 'I hereby leave and bequeath the sum of one thousand pounds.'" Miss Blodgett spluttered. "A . . . a . . . thousand pounds! And to think that I'll never touch a penny of it." She suddenly tucked her handkerchief into her sleeve again, and looked up at the clock on a church tower showing between the high offices. The little gold wrist watch she used to wear was not on her arm. "I am on my way down to the solicitor now," she said. "I have to go down every other day. They're doing their best for me. Lord Robert is most upset. And Miss Lucy. Indeed they all

are extremely kind. But, as for myself, I haven't much hope. You see, it would have been all right if poor Miss Tate had not tried to show me that last mark of affection. It would have been all right if she had left the money to Miss Emma Blodgett. That was what the solicitor said. 'You are Emma Blodgett,' he said. 'But who is this fond niece, Emma?' There is no such person. There are fifty-four nieces, counting grandnieces and two great grandnieces; but none of them is called Emma! It is perfectly clear of course to everyone that it was me that was meant. But," Miss Blodgett's lips trembled again, "but what good is that to me?" She put out her hand. "I must be going," she said. "Those solicitors are very exact. They don't like to be kept waiting, although indeed they think nothing of keeping others waiting. I'm often kept waiting an hour up there, and at the end I sometimes have to go away without seeing him, if an urgent call comes on the telephone and he has to go down to the courts. But his typist is very nice. She always gets me a chair." For an instant she brightened as she held my hand. "Do you know what I discovered the other day," she said. "The typist is a niece of Hetty's. You remember Hetty? Hetty was always very careful with her money, you know, and she educated all her brother's children. They all have good jobs. This girl in the solicitor's office is a very well-educated girl. She's very civil. As I say, she always gets me a chair when I call, and she's always very sorry for me if I have to go away without seeing the solicitor. 'Don't worry Emma,' she says. 'everything will be all right!' She's a very exceptional girl. Her name is Miss Hynes. Hetty's name was Hynes, you know."

I had almost forgotten to ask about Hetty.

"And how is Hetty?" I asked.

"Oh, Hetty is all right," said Miss Blodgett. "She's gone to live with her brother. They're glad to have her of course; she has a nice nest egg saved. And then of course Miss Tate left her a nice little sum too."

"And Hetty got it all right?" I asked.

Miss Blodgett's big, stupid, blue eyes were turned on me in swift surprise.

"Why, of course!" she said. "Why wouldn't she get it? It was left to Hester Hynes. That was Hetty's right name. Hetty was nothing to Miss Tate! Miss Tate had no special feelings for Hetty. She just mentioned her name as a matter of course." Miss Blodgett had risen again for a moment to the height of the old days. Her bosom swelled. Her eye gleamed.

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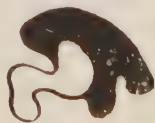
"Hetty was only a servant!" she said. "She was nothing to Aunt Adeline!"

And then, there and then, in the dark, shabby street, a strange thing happened. Down from the sky, as bright and straight as a drop of rain, I saw a little silver arrow descend, making straight for Miss Blodgett's heart. I looked down startled. The cameo brooch was gone from Miss Blodgett's bosom. I held my breath. But then the strangest thing of all took place. I saw why the vicious little silver arrow had never pierced Miss Blodgett's heart, for in the clear light of day, unclouded by the thick lace curtains of Rattigan Rowe, although it was travelling with the speed of lightning, although it was pointed with the most deadly silver barb, just as it came within a breath of Miss Blodgett's kindly, stupidly-throbbing heart, I saw the silver arrow shiver for an instant and shatter into a thousand fragments.

"Well I must be going, my dear," said Miss Blodgett unconcerned and unknowing. "Sometimes you know I get tired of going up to the solicitor's, but I say to myself that Miss Tate will never rest in her grave until I have made the last possible effort to rectify her mistake." She put out her hand. "Good-bye, my dear!" she said. "Thank you for your sympathy. I'll let you know how things turn out."

She turned away then, and I saw that the tears had gathered again in her eyes. I heard her mutter something to herself as I stood looking after the blue imitation silk dress, and the ample ankles in the blue woollen socks. I couldn't be sure, but I think what I heard was a sigh and an exclamation.

"Poor Aunt Adeline! Poor Aunt Adeline!"



JOHN HEWITT



First Snow in The Glens

When the winter sky, snow ominous, crowds in,
here at the wood's edge is the world's end;
the valley cockcrow, the bleat of sheep on the hills
hint of a wider stage, like friendly rumours,
but our immediate place is an island in time.

Chopping the twigs on a stump till the dull blood sang
(my arm beats still with the unaccustomed labour)
I too was a warm oasis-island of joy,
watching the first light flakes, and hearing the leaves
dry on the hard ground whisper salutation,
hearing the robin's chirr, and following
the wren's intentions in the bare thorn hedge;
for no large life, this hour, shall intersect
my patient curves; since even the hooded hag
tying her faggot of kindling, garrulous,
and John MacNaghten, that slow friendly lad,
clumping up the lane to his snares in the whins,
and, at a distance, striding through slant flakes
a man, not seen before, with bag and gun,
have the same lease and something of the nature
of rocking branch, of blackbird, bluetit, wren.

PADRAIC COLUM

Ibsen In Irish Writing

DO many who practise Irish writing nowadays read Ibsen's plays? Those of us who were at the Irish theatre's beginnings read and discussed them all the time; indeed as far as we were able to do it, we made ourselves apprentices to that distant but expressive master. Our elders abetted us. I remember meeting George Moore coming from an amateur performance of "A Doll's House" and his exclaiming "Shakespeare! Sophocles! What are they to this?" Edward Martyn's pattern-drama was "The Wild Duck." However, after reading some early plays of mine Yeats warned me against complete submission. "We are obsessed by the translation," he said, meaning by that that the power and charm of the original word was being overlooked by some of us in the thrilling contact with Ibsen's structure. Here is where Synge was influenced by Ibsen: he reacted against the colourless and toneless words of Ibsen's translators by piling up the extravagances of Gaelic-English speech.

More than any ancient or modern Ibsen was then the exemplar. Frank Fay, who had influence on the writers, was always glorifying Ibsen. And outside the theatre group, the young man who was to write "Ulysses" and "Finnegans Wake" had given so much of his mind to Ibsen that he was able to review "When We Dead Awaken" from the original. I remember a walk along the South Circular Road when James Joyce repeated to me in Danish (or whatever language Ibsen used), a lyric about water-lilies. But when I spoke of George Moore's superlatives, Joyce, with his unruffled critical intelligence, said of "A Doll's House," "Of course it will remain interesting as a post-card written by Ibsen will remain interesting." For him the great play was "Hedda Gabler"; he had

acted in it in an amateur production. Had he then written him that letter on his seventieth birthday in which he delineates an Ibsen who has a likeness to the author of "Ulysses"? I do not know. Nor do I know if he wrote it in Danish or in English. Here are some lines from it:—

I have shown what, as it seemed to me, was your highest excellence—your lofty impersonal power. How your wilful resolution to wrest the secret from life gave me heart, and how in your absolute indifference to public canons of art, friends, and shibboleths, you walked in the light of your inner heroism.

Joyce's "Exiles" is a minor work compared with "Portrait of the Artist," "Ulysses," "Finnegans Wake"; it dates from the time when Ibsen's was the strongest of the influences on him. One of the few productions it had was in Norway, and I am sure that it meant more to him than a production anywhere else. He submitted to my spelling out the notices that were sent to him, for his eyes were in a bad state at the time; that was in the 'thirties.

In Sean O'Casey's plays there is nothing of Ibsen's influence. For me, "Juno and the Paycock" and "The Shadow of a Gunman" were novelties in Irish dramatic writing because the influences were from Shaw, Shakespeare, and, above all, Boucicault—influences that had been shut out in the theatre's early days. I do not know what the influences are on the younger dramatic writers. And I do not suppose there is, as there used to be, an authority in Irish letters whose recommendations would have any effect. If there were, and a study of Ibsen were put in the programme, it would be to the good. The element which is weak in Irish plays, structure, is so manifest in Ibsen's that one with a leaning towards the drama has to recognize and be impressed by it.

But to deal with the Master himself. Henrik Ibsen was fortunate in the training he went through. A young poet with an interest in the art of painting, he was given a job in a provincial theatre (read Galway, Limerick) at the age of twenty. In obscurity he learnt the other side of playwriting: what can and cannot be said, what can and cannot be done on a stage. There were no stars to bring about distortion in the designs he had to form. What he learnt he learnt in obscurity, that is to say with no outside veils to obstruct him. Those six years of apprenticeship when he wore shabby clothes and had few acquaintances were the making of that rare artist, a great dramatist. There was a national revival in his country at the time, and that, as in the like movement in our own country later, had the effect of leading him and others to look deep

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into the national soul and so discover new themes.

He left very little comment on his approach to his work. One thing he said, however, is illuminating. "To see and record adequately what one has seen—that is the whole of writing." The man who deals with a public or an audience, the dramatist or the orator (they have a great deal in common) has a compelling method when he is able to visualize and to hold the things visualized in his mind. This is more than a method—it is sight leading to insight. Ibsen's characters and the action they are part of, being strongly seen by him, are strongly seen by his audience; the audience are made take notice; they are made alert. This dramatist was a man of eyesight—his attempts at painting show this—and he trained himself to use his eyesight; for one who has to compel the audience to follow the significant movements before them, this was a profitable training.

His plays were revolutionary but they were not experimental; from the first time we know him Henrik Ibsen was too well instructed a dramatist to give us what was experimental. He did not ask for revolving stages, for narrator or chorus, for a curtain that descends every ten minutes, for a cast of forty persons (but "The Pretenders" and "The Vikings" have large casts). He wrote plays that a provincial theatre could put on. But he was a great innovator, one of the greatest in the history of the theatre, and his innovations had not to do with what was external but with what could be integrated with the characters and the action. In the plays that began with "A Doll's House" he showed the people of the neighbourhood in three dimensions while unfolding the drama that was inherent in their lives; no character, nay, no characteristic was redundant, no sentence in what they said to each other anything under a dramatic potential. These were masterly things to have done in the theatre, but Henrik Ibsen exceeded them. His people's lives were carried backward as we watched and listened, and the retrospect gave a drama beyond the present drama and redoubled the force of the action. Ibsen's people have a history and that makes them different essentially from the people of any other modern dramatist. Compare with them the people who are on Bernard Shaw's stage, with Tom Broadbent or Larry Doyle, say. They are living in the scene, these people, but they have never lived anywhere else. Ibsen's people have, and the way they have lived in the past has formed them and given them an attitude to the present situation. What technical efficiency it has taken to make this history present to us!

And while he made us more and more familiar with his

people, he augmented dramatic tension and dramatic dynamics. This was not all that he did in the theatre. Action on any stage is so bounded and localized that to give it extension something symbolic has to be made apparent. In different plays Ibsen embodied a symbol that gave poetry and universality to the action, lifting it above the locality that the people lived in, above the period whose dresses they wore: the wild duck in the garret, the pistols that Hedda Gabler entertained herself with, the veins of metal in the mines whose singing John Gabriel Borkman had listened to, the veins that became the dagger of cold metal that entered his heart. His symbols were intrinsic; they never gave the effect of being intentional.

"John Gabriel Borkman" is Ibsen's penultimate: it precedes "When We Dead Awaken," the last work of the Master. Dramatic technique has reached finality in it. The exposition, that preview of character and motives which must not be prolix (the conversation over the telephone so sadly artless is the popular way of dodging this problem of technique) was always superbly managed by Ibsen—it was made part of the action. In this play there seems to be no exposition at all: the action begins with the rise of the curtain. And the action is completed in the time the audience witnesses it—a unity of time which is absolute. But to a student of drama this is not so vital as is another achievement in "John Gabriel Borkman." How to keep surprise, suspense, contrast, mounting intensity in long scenes between two persons is a problem for a dramatist who has got beyond playwriting: in this play as in the previous "Little Eyolf," Ibsen makes the drama depend on a succession of duologues. To get an understanding of how he builds up these great scenes is enlightening to the writer who wants to work in the theatre.

A book which I have just read has been published by a Norse college in America, "Henrik Ibsen: A Study in Art and Personality," by Theodore Jorgenson. Very little of the dramatist's personal life is set down in it, but what is touched on is revealing—the bankruptcy of Ibsen's father and the family descent socially, the fact that at nineteen Ibsen had an illegitimate child by a servant girl. "The chasm between what we are and what we desire to be" is, according to this critic, the real matter of Ibsen's plays. "When he starts writing upon a particular subject he rarely exhausts it in one drama, but turns it over and approaches the matter from another angle in a subsequent work." Ibsen's mind, then, was dialectical, opposing one theme to another: the necessity for truth in social relations which was the theme of "An Enemy of the People" is given its counter-

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point in "The Wild Duck" where the danger of presenting the bill for absolute idealism is underscored. The critic recognizes the affinity between the pattern in the dramatist's mind and the philosopher Hegel's dialectic,—thesis and antithesis, and the synthesis which includes both. For Ibsen the synthesis was the Third Kingdom of which Maximus the Mystic speaks to the Emperor Julian in "Emperor and Galilean," the kingdom which would include both Hellenism and Christianity. It is towards the Third, the mystical Kingdom, that the frustrated Rubek and Irene turn in Ibsen's final play. Yes, but to what do the suicides in "Rosmersholm" turn? And the two shadow women who are left beside the dead John Gabriel Borkman?

When his social plays were first given to Europe there was a tendency to regard them as problem plays of a higher kind—the problem of a woman's place in social and political life, the problem of heredity, the problem of the functionless woman and so on. But Ibsen's plays cannot be kept in such bounds: they are dynamic and dialectical, and the force in them carries them into our time and beyond. It is time that our interest in the great Northern Master revived, bringing us back some of the excitement that such titles as "The Master Builder," "Hedda Gabler," "The Wild Duck," brought when they signified openings into a world of new and intense experience. If, forty years after his death, we again look towards him, we will find that the arresting thing about the creator who was Henrik Ibsen is his maturity: it was tremendously in evidence in him when at the age of twenty-six he wrote "Lady Inger of Ostraat," and it was in evidence in him when at the age of seventy he wrote "John Gabriel Borkmann." Who else among his contemporaries shows a maturity equal to his? Tolstoy can be named for the same quality. But Ibsen's work is more fascinating than Tolstoy's: Ibsen is a dramatist, and drama (as distinct from play-making) represents a conquest of the material on a higher level than narrative writing does: a mind not only of high imaginative power but of high power of ordering has to be apparent: structure itself becomes potent. In the history of literature there are few dramatic masterpieces: certain of Ibsen's dramas are amongst them.

PATRICIA HUTCHINS



Joseph Hone—Biographer

THE portrait painter usually considers his subject not so much in profile as full or three-quarter face. There the contradictions of a personality can be summarised, resolved into a moment's expression, which is the artist's idea of a man's whole life. It is this effort of imaginative concentration which lies behind a Fragonard, a Rembrandt or—let's say—an Augustus John.

Yeats declared that John 'exaggerates every little hill and hollow of the face until one looks like a gypsy grown old in wickedness and hardship. If one looked like any of his pictures the country women would take the clean clothes off the hedges when one passed, as they do at the sight of a tinker.'

The same artist has done an excellent study of Joseph Hone, selected by Allan Gwynne Jones for the National Arts Council exhibition of portraiture in London in 1946, which is now in the Tate: that of Yeats belongs to the Manchester Gallery, for not only the Lane collection remains in England. Later the poet began to feel that John had found something he liked in him, something closer than character and by that very transformation made it visible.

By the same method, an initial suggestion of dreaming vacuity in the Hone portrait eventually serves to clarify one's contemporary impression of the biographer. There is the characteristic backward tilt of the head, as if to see more directly from under thick, lichen-like eyebrows, a great deal of forehead, a lean face but for folds round the mouth and setting back the chin, a certain humour, perspicacity, patience, perhaps

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dissatisfaction, about the wide, soft-formed mouth.

I had first seen Joseph Hone in the middle of one of those shapeless entertainments known as a sherry party, where guests can neither sit nor stand comfortably, conversation is elbowed out of place or spilled over, interrupted by introductions and sausages. He stood detached, politely indifferent, like a weathered tree preserved, quite out of context, in a newly-made garden or a public square where they are always moving the plants. He seemed bird-like, shoulders hunched-up, weight on one leg, the attitude of a heron watching the water ripple past, or taking a slow long stride to some more favourable observation post across the river.

One paid more attention then, to his voice and manner of speaking, half hesitation, half an unwillingness to waste breath on the unnecessary. This has some relation, perhaps, to attacks of asthma in one who now measures out physical strength so as to run the precarious engine of the body as little as possible on the reserve. Meeting him again in O'Connell Street one day, I noticed the habit of looking beyond one, to stare at roofs or the sky, which reveals the blue, methylated-spirit-flame colour of his eyes, extraordinary eyes.

His reputation stands high among the connoisseurs and literary 'specialists,' if one may use this horrid word. Without the dramatic gestures of Yeats and Moore and A.E., with their plays and controversies and theories, it takes a considerable time for the name of an author such as Joseph Hone to become part of the equipment of the more general reader. Many of his earlier books were published in Dublin by Maunsel's, a company with which he was connected, and to whom James Stephens, Synge, and Padraic Colum owe some of their early appearances in print. James Joyce carried on a long correspondence about the proposed publication of *Dubliners* which was eventually rejected by Maunsel. On this subject Mr. Hone is as yet a closed—but how interesting—dossier.

Who's Who shows him to have been born in 1882 of Irish parents and educated at Wellington and Cambridge, and gives as recreations; 'formerly cricket, now reading Italian and German philosophers.' In 1909 he went to Persia with Page L. Dickinson, and in 1910 Maunsel's published *Persia in Revolution* which gives an interesting account of that country on the eve of the deposition of the Kajar Shahs. The following year showed that he had also been busy for some time on the translation of Daniel Halévy's *Life of Nietzsche* with an

introduction—a very brilliant one—by T. M. Kettle. About this he likes to tell, how, when the work was in progress, Kettle was involved in a serious motor-accident in which his companion in the car was killed. 'The publisher,' says Joseph Hone, 'who was paying Kettle the munificent fee of £3 3s. 0d. for his work, telegraphed to me for further details. When I replied that Kettle was unscathed, he wrote to express his relief, adding 'but I am very sorry for the other fellow'.

The later translations, such as a study by Seillière of the philosophical aspects of German Imperialism and *Pilgrimage in the West* by Mario M. Rossi, the Italian philosopher and poet, Montegut's study of *John Mitchel*, Porkoney on *The History of Ireland*, both by their prefaces and text show that Hone has thoroughly understood, not only the import, but the word-material and its background with which these books have been constructed. A good deal of reviewing and criticism had also been undertaken for periodicals in England. An article in the London Mercury in 1929, deals with *Berkeley at Cloyne*, and three years later a biography of the Irish philosopher, written in collaboration with Dr. Rossi, was published by Faber and Faber. In the words of Yeats' introduction:

'I study with excitement this profound critic of philosophy (Rossi), this scholar learned in all the schools who can make himself intelligible to the running man. He has given me my first full knowledge of Berkeley the philosopher; my knowledge of Berkeley the man I shall always owe to Joseph Hone's understanding of the Irish 18th century, his mastery of biographical detail.'

Apart from a pamphlet, *Ireland since 1922*, Joseph Hone's later work has been mainly autobiographical. A study, *Swift or the Egoist* was also written with M. M. Rossi. Thomas Davis followed and a life of George Moore led on to *The Moores of Moore Hall*. Just before the war *The Life of Tonks* appeared. Then in 1942 the official biography of W. B. Yeats was published in England and America, and will remain perhaps, his most important work.

As a young man, he had undertaken a short book dealing with the poet, published in 1915, when Yeats was already well known. On the whole he seems to have stood outside much of the literary and political conflict of his time, and this position of the sympathetic but detached observer who lived through much of the period covered in the latter part of the biography, gives the work a quality which later studies will hardly achieve.

From the great effort which this study entailed, Hone turned

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to editing and arrangement again; the love story of Davis as shown by the letters of Annie Hutton, J. B. Yeats' *Letters to his Son, and others*. He is now working on a book of his own memoirs.

In the meantime one can only put together one's personal impressions of a writer who is a literary generation and a half older: the established 'younger' authors, Sean O'Faolain, Frank O'Connor, and so on, are now undercropped as it were, by another series of names. But 'Joe Hone,' as many call him, has a great capacity for surprise, a way of disregarding the hedges and ditches which a discrepancy in age so often reveals in conversation. His modesty does not allow him the 'Before you were born' attitude, often implying the failure of an important examination which would have brought one earlier into the world.

'What do you think of Yeats' later poems?' he might ask, as if this opinion were important. Yet, time is everything to him and he speaks of an earlier Dublin as if it were a film we did not go to see.

'I remember when Mrs. Patrick Campbell came to act in Yeats' *Deirdre* . . .'

'There was the day that Horace de Vere Cole—the man who impersonated the Sultan of Zanzibar at Cambridge, you know—overturned a hansom cab outside the Shelbourne . . .'

'One evening at the Standard Hotel, I was entertaining Charles Russell, the American, a radical, when A.E. drove up. I think they'd already differed about De Valera. . . . Later Philip Graves, the *Times* correspondent, joined us. It was the last time I saw A. E. . . .'

In giving a contrary opinion, or to correct a fact, Joseph Hone may begin a sentence, 'Well, I don't know, but it seems to me I saw something about it in connection with . . . but of course I might be wrong.' Vagueness often conceals precision and clear-sightedness, as his clothes, without being either conventional or altogether Bohemian, cover the long, tree-like figure. An apparent lack of interest is often contradicted by a later reference to a subject under discussion. He appears to enjoy meeting younger people, to follow the bubble of their opinions, and often rises to the occasion with a story, or a comment, at first not altogether understood. This might lead to more scattered memories, never repetition, always some *trouville* of the moment.

South Hill, the house where the Hone family lived for many years at Killiney, had a lovely garden down the slopes. The family, originally Flemish, had come to Dublin

in the later part of the 17th century from London. A certain Gallion Hone, in Henry VII's reign, had done stained glass windows for King's College, Cambridge and St. Margaret's, Westminster, an art taken up in our time by Evie Hone, cousin of the biographer. Under the Georges, they had accumulated fine furniture, glass, silver, and, rare enough in Ireland, taken good care of them. Among their possessions are works of the 18th century Nathaniel Hone, born in Ireland. Following a dispute with Sir Joshua Reynolds, he was the first artist to hold 'a one-man show' in London. There are also various pictures by that other painter of the same name, famous for his landscapes thirty or forty years ago.

The books of the library, which one might describe as ranging from Scott to Gertrude Stein, and a good deal more, had obviously been collected to be read, with some valuable editions among them. Beside the yellow, paper-covered volumes of Italian and French, Proust, Croce, Valéry, D'Annunzio, stand the green-grey respectability of the philosophers, and theologians, Plato, Plotinus, Nietzsche, Spengler; or the splash and colour of more recent books, Kierkegaard translations, collected Yeats and George Moore. Among the mulberry covers of Swift's works one might notice green and gold of Douglas Hyde on Irish literature, Curtis, Walter Pater, Coventry Patmore, editions of Blake, James Joyce, various Georgian poets and smaller books of modern verse.

The manuscript for the biographies, as far as one could make out, never had any particular home or sanctuary. The family were always 'looking for something of Joe's', a letter, or a quotation which had been copied out. Most of the references are kept in envelopes, theoretically, but open any book and out comes a note from the author, newspaper cuttings or simply the 'Editor's Compliments' on a review slip. Thus the collection carries a personal link with its owner; his opinion, enjoyment or disapprobation are never very far distant. The envelopes are often stored in boxes, and as new work is undertaken these find their way into trunks, cupboards or storehouses. In consequence Joseph Hone's call upon the past has that confusion, apparent confusion, whereby quite unexpected treasures may be found in the search for some scrap of information of which he would like 'to make quite sure.'

Perhaps he really has no desk. I often saw him sitting sideways, because of legs too long to fit comfortably under any table, making corrections in the manuscript of *W. B. Yeats*, just before lunch, as a woman might take up a piece of knitting. Few can have seen him really at work, coming downstairs early in the morning, when everyone else is asleep, to make a cup of tea, in felt slippers and bright blue sweater perhaps, only half-zipped-up; then, hair more fantastic than ever and cheeks pleated back in concentration over that black, hoppity-jump

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writing.

George Moore, I think, wrote down his ideas and impressions as a kind of rigmarole and later imposed discipline upon them. Joseph Hone does not seem to possess the story-teller's ease, the natural sentence which bubbles up and then has to be controlled. Within a style which is smooth-running but unobtrusive his method appears to be that of good craftsmanship, the selection and balance of biographical emphasis, the skilled joinery of different parts. There is also something extra, supplied by good taste, in the best sense of a degraded word, humour and imagination, similar perhaps to the stained glass worker's use of form and colour, not to exclude light but enriching it.

It is easy enough to write the life of a man or woman to a preconceived idea, to destroy or puff out a reputation. For his work to stand beside the achievements of great portraiture the real biographer must search, not for one aspect of the truth but a reflection of the whole.



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THE OLD GENTLEMEN SAY 'YES'!

TARRY FLYNN, by Patrick Kavanagh (*Pilot Press*. 8/6).

In the first place, this is not a novel. If it is not—as I contend—it has at least the distinction of being the first Irish non-fiction work to be banned by our Censorship. Or am I out of date? Which—nowadays, even for a constant reader of the *New Yorker* or *The Messenger*—is likely enough. Forgive the autobiographical note, dear reader, but in dealing with Mr. Kavanagh one has somehow always to be autobiographical.

I loved *Tarry Flynn*. Let that be put on record for the generations to come. But I loved it with reservations. Let that be recorded too. I loved it because I saw in it (however mistakenly) the most superb full-length piece of portraiture of any of my friends I have ever encountered. My friend Compton Mackenzie may or may not have set out to give us two volumes of self-portraiture in “Sinister Street” (You now know that I am nearing or have passed the fifty mark). My older friend Forrest Reid, may have done the same in “Pender among the Residents” or “Following Darkness.” My all-but-contemporary J. B. Priestley, may have projected himself in scraps in “The Good Companions” or “Benighted”; my close friend, Joseph Tomelty have displayed a limb or two of his own in “Red is the Port Light.” But none of these has succeeded—intentionally or not—in evoking himself so virulently, so violently, as Kavanagh in *Tarry Flynn*.

Or am I wrong?

I loathe the word reportage—perhaps because I'm never quite sure how to spell it. But I loathe the thing itself—whatever it is—even more. And that is my objection to Kavanagh's publishers describing *Tarry Flynn* as a novel. For whatever it is—the musicians would describe it, more correctly, as a rhapsody—it is not a novel. It is what they used to call, in the twenties, a “slice of life.” And *what* a slice! Or rather what a graspful! A teeming, swarming, squiggling graspful.

And the story? Well, there's, strictly speaking, none at all. The setting is the County Monaghan. Time, the late

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nineteen-thirties. Background, an impoverished farming family, matriarch-governed—with no father and a wild-eyed twenty-seven-year-old son, Tarry, who would seem to combine the epilepsy of a Dostoevsky with the single-minded rhapsody of a Blake, who is for ever at odds with the neighbours and the local priests, who regard him as more than somewhat an eccentric. Incidents there are in plenty, but none of them adds to Tarry's stature as a character—not even that best episode in the book, the Village Concert and Dance, from which poor Tarry is debarred because of the lack of fourpence, the difference between two-and-tuppence and half-a-crown.

Kavanagh has given us a superb piece of characterisation in Tarry's mother, and one would have given much for a lot more of her. But the only fictional character—the only one who really contributes to the development of the story—is the impoverished, returned-from-abroad Uncle who turns up only in the last few pages and seems to promise to Tarry a New Life. But whether that New Life ever materialises (one presumes) must be left to a sequel.

I hope people will understand me when I say that I'm glad that Kavanagh has got *Tarry Flynn* off his chest. For it seems to me the sort of book that any writer of quality has to get off his chest before he settles down to write non-subjective fiction. The old nonsense about everyone having one book in him may have a grain of truth in it. For my own part, I don't believe in it. What I do believe is that every good writer has one book in him which he *must* write to get rid of a lot of violent feelings about people and about life. But it's not the book for publication. That's why I wished Kavanagh hadn't published *Tarry Flynn*. Only those who know Kavanagh personally will know what I mean. He still feels about the word "dung" what West-End playgoers felt about the word "bloody" when Shaw wrote *Pygmalion*. P.S.—*Tarry Flynn* has been "unbanned," but the disgrace to our niggles-naggle Censorship remains.

H. L. M.

ESCAPE AND ESCAPISM

OVER THE REEFS, by Robert Gibbings (*Dent*, 15/-).

"Escapism" is one of those labour-saving words that has come to dominate, confound and befuddle latter-day criticism. I mention it to indicate the difference between "escapism" and "escape"—two almost contradictory conceptions. "Escapism" is a woolly *malaise* of the mind, an attempt to shirk facing

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life by auto-intoxication or day-dreaming. "Escape" is a definite and courageous course of action—as concrete and deliberate as a prison break.

In this book Gibbings does not romance about how nice it would be in the "lovely South Sea Islands"; he escapes from Europe, goes there, or rather, returns after an absence of eighteen years. He knows the Islands, the people, the language and customs—and what is even more important, they know and appreciate him. There is no ballyhoo about this book—nothing phoney. The people are real and comprehensible, and Gibbings' quiet, unassuming narrative underlines more than any hysterical wail could the tragedy of their gradual extinction by the white civilisation they so graciously tolerated.

Usually when I like a book as much as this, I can find plenty to criticise in the get-up, lay-out, format—or the illustrations. In this case Gibbings is responsible for everything, and there just isn't anything to criticise. A University lecturer in Typography and Book-Production may or may not be inspired; but Gibbings ran the Golden Cockerel Press for ten years. . . He is perhaps the finest living engraver in wood, and this coupled with his intimate knowledge and love of the Islands, his clean prose style, completes his unique qualifications for the job in hand.

At a time when wood-engraving was losing its place among the graphic arts—owing to the great strides made in photo-engraving, Gibbings was one of a small group of artists who restored wood-cutting and engraving to its rightful position as an independent art.

Some of Gibbings' earlier work I found a little heavy, a little too "contrasty," to borrow a term from photography; it seemed to me to overbalance the lighter, modern type-faces. But in this volume, the delicate balance between page, type, margin and engraving is perfectly preserved. There is a sparkling half-tone in all the illustrations which never approaches the "greyness" which is the main danger of over-cutting into the "blacks." Apart from the technique of engraving, Gibbings has an affectionate way of treating objects—a palm-leaf basket, a mother-of-pearl bonito book, a ceremonial drum, that appeals to the imagination and summons up to the mind's eye the place where these things are and have their being.

It has become a commonplace that artists are usually surprising performers with the pen. Gibbings is no exception, and combines all the cunning of the professional author with a complete lack of literary affectations. The touching narrative of Lili from Papeete, meeting Gibbings after his eighteen years' absence, and her description of her experiences with her English

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husband in London are told with rare subtlety and charm.

For myself, I should have liked an appendix with a few notes on matters unexplained in the text: What are the functions of a "Taupou" or ceremonial maiden? How and why is she chosen? Perhaps Mr. Gibbings will give us this in one of the ensuing editions of this memorable book. I am sure there will be many.

CECIL FFRENCH SALKELD

THE SHORT STORY by Sean O'Faolain (*Collins, 10, 6*).

"I believe that all art is about one-tenth skill and the rest is personality."

This is one of the many provocative statements that Seán O'Faolain makes in his important book on the Short Story. The subject matter is arranged in logical sequence and embraces every facet of short story writing and appreciation. Its introductory note is "On Keeping The Lines Clear" of which the most important single statement is that "adventure is interior, and personality can be developed or concocted out of apparently nothing at all." Seán O'Faolain proves the truth of these basic statements by a surgical examination of the personal struggles of Daudet, Chekov and de Maupassant. So much for the nine-tenths. Then it deals with the one-tenth—The Technical Struggle—under the heads of Convention, Subject, Construction and Language, and concludes with eight masterly stories that illustrate best the points raised.

Seán O'Faolain demands of a story that it have "poetry and punch." Surely this is over-simplification. Poetry—yes! Punch—no! Accepting the stories he himself takes his stand on for illustrative purposes, "punch" seems an inadequate word with which to describe the reader's reaction in each case. Reading Elizabeth Bowen's "Her Table Spread" one has the sensation of having interviewed a respectable lady who is addicted to flicking bright innocent razors; "The Sire de Malétroit's Door" by Stevenson gives one the feeling of having been born anew in a burnished morning world. And how is one to define the flood of brisk humanity that is experienced on reading Hemingway's "Light of the World," or the crawling internal desolation which is the echo to Frank O'Connor's "In The Train." Better that he should demand of a short story that it possess "poetry and projection." "Projection" (a common editorial touch-stone) is the thin rod that the good short story thrusts into the consciousness. Almost every reader has been quizzed by stories that are faulty, because although they possess

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the element of poetry, they lack that indefinable "projection."

Perhaps the most interesting chapter in the book, if not indeed the most important, is that on Convention. Here almost every second sentence jockeys for quotation. The neophyte writer or the enquiring reader is presented on a platter with vital truths that he must sweat blood to discover for himself. What a vast amount of labour the beginner is saved if his experience has given him the wit to recognise the truth when it is pointed out to him. In this chapter is shown the gradual shedding or refining of the conventions of writing, the dispensing with props, the constant postulating of certain principles that have been fought for and conceded, until eventually we reach the stage when technique is pared to the bone as in Hemingway. It is a process rather analogous to the replacement of the awkward scaffolding of masts, barrels, and lashing by neat jointed tubular steel. Anyone who has lived in a small imaginative community and watched over a number of years the development of the shorthand, the innuendo and the compression in a lively vernacular, until by refinement the art or oral story-telling natural in that locality is highly esoteric and unintelligible to an outsider, has seen in microcosm the development of all literature.

Under the head of Subject there is one quotation that is jewelled with wisdom: "Any young writer will only waste his time and invite disappointments and court base temptation by poking about for ingenious situations or composing clever plots, and then some day he will discover that in the innocence of his heart which this kind of whoring after cleverness destroys, he has remembered something that moved him, written it down without affectation and found it good."

To date this book is, in its own field, definitive. At times it is informal, but it is always cogent and provocative. No theory is put forward unbuttressed. When clean critical faculty and industry are united within the circle of the imagination of a single writer, a work of this importance is the only outcome.

BRYAN MacMAHON.

THE ROAD TO STRATFORD. By Frank O'Connor. (*Methuen & Co., Ltd., 7/6*).

We may find it hard to keep up with Mr. O'Connor on the road he takes to Stratford, for he strides over difficult ground with enviable assurance, and leaps obstacles which ordinary men must walk around or climb laboriously. We may fail to see with his eyes, and may sometimes think he tilts at windmills. Yet when all is said, we may prefer to travel delight-

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fully with him than to arrive with many another.

In Mr. O'Connor's view Shakespeare was for most of his career not a dramatist, but a poet writing out of his own inner experience. The *Henry VI* plays reveal him as such a poet, and as an energetic, ambitious, passionate man, because that is what all the people in those plays are. With *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Merchant of Venice* we reach the period of the great masterpieces, when he is half in, half out of, his shell, and so writing drama. Shylock and Falstaff 'engage the real contradiction in his nature,' and are dramatic; but in later plays there is no trace of that kind of character. Apart from *Rosalind As You Like It* is a rag-bag, and Touchstone could be left out without loss. *Twelfth Night* is glassy and brittle: here we see warmth and kindness disappearing from Shakespeare's work. *Hamlet* hovers between realism and excessive personal emotion; and after it we revert to dramas which take place only in the theatre of the poet's mind. *Othello* and *Lear* are great dramatic poems but failures as plays. Shakespeare 'was not interested in tragedy as such; he was interested only in saying what he had to say'—that as flies to wanton boys are we to the gods, that life is a tale told by an idiot. 'Nothing opposes the storm of misanthropy which blows through these later plays': Cordelia and her successors represent merely 'the passive principle.' The one mistake we must avoid when considering the last plays is to imagine that they express 'optimism' or 'reconciliation.' They sound an appalling note of weariness, and speak a philosophy of stoical despair. Years before he died Shakespeare was dead emotionally, squeezed dry of Christian faith and feeling.

With much of that I disagree profoundly. So, with varying emphasis, will most readers, perhaps. But that is a good reason for recommending the book: gloriously controversial in almost every page, it makes us examine afresh our basic ideas concerning Shakespeare's mind and art.

A good deal of space is given to questions of authorship, collaboration and revision, and to such detective work Mr. O'Connor brings a ready ear for verbal echoes and correspondences.

FITZROY PYLE

BOOK REVIEWS

THE AGE OF ANXIETY: A BAROQUE ECLOGUE. By W. H. Auden (*Faber & Faber Ltd.*, 8/6).

NO REBEL WORD. By John Hewitt (*Frederick Muller Ltd.*, 7/6).

ON SEEMING TO PRESUME. By Lawrence Durrell (*Faber & Faber Ltd.*, 8/6).

THE LADY WITH THE UNICORN. By Vernon Watkins (*Faber & Faber Ltd.*, 8/6).

The Age of Anxiety is a long work written in a nine-syllabled line with three alliterations which in reading gives the impression of watching a tennis match from too close up. There are lyrics here and there in, for the most part, the same lopped-off Piers Plowman line, and interludes in a prose which at times reads like an unhappy translation. It is of course all done deliberately, and quite effectively creates and maintains a waiting-for-the-end-of-the-world atmosphere. The technique is cold-blooded and merciless, particularly in the lyric passages where eye and ear, expectant to find built-up riming, meet instead crumbling dissonance.

The setting is a New York bar on a night of All Souls in wartime, 'when everybody is reduced to the anxious status of a shady character or a displaced person.' Four people met there, and after becoming acquainted, they enumerated the seven stages of man, then dream (present tense) through the seven ages of man, after which they celebrated a little more and parted, promising to look each other up again sometime. There is an epilogue with clear echoes of *The Hound of Heaven*.

Our delight in this virtuoso work must be taken with guarded conscience. An organic relationship between the theme and form may be granted on reflection, but other less affected forms suggest themselves as possibly more appropriate. The use of this lame-stepping Anglo-Saxon metre is singularly in keeping with Mr. Auden's overgrown schoolboy humour. It may be overlooked but not encouraged. *New Year Letter* and *For The Time Being* might have been the doodlings of an out of work genius, though the title of the latter and much of the book raised hopes. The genius is undeniable but it has yet to find something useful to do. *The Age of Anxiety* once again shows Mr. Auden accomplishing little yet leaving us with the feeling

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that his next work will justify everything.

Mr. Hewitt's poems as they appeared in magazine and periodical gave promise of a sincere talent with a gift for honest expression. Re-read in book form they reveal Mr. Hewitt as one of our self-accused aliens. Wandering the glens and roadways of Antrim he feels himself unable to respond to his neighbours, 'so many fences stretch between our minds. Many of these poems unfortunately suggest that environmental unhappiness may well be mistaken for the true exile of the creative mind. We are likely to suspect an attempt at easy self-compensation when language and form are often diffuse, sometimes untidy. It is more difficult to account for the echoes of Wordsworth's most uninspired moments, and for phrasing such as 'what weather was to be.'

Mr. Hewitt strives for *naïvete* which fails him but which with more confidence in his surroundings could be richly rewarding. Accepted forms help him and his best work is in *Sonnets in October*. In the second of these in particular, with its lines well balanced and each word alive and poised, there is promise of the harvest he can reap.

Mr. Durrell is one of the group of young poets who spent their war years mostly in the Near East. For him it was obviously a lightly suffered exile. These new poems are as heady as brilliant conversation, and his half-shy scholarship is a graceful compliment. Words and forms are finely used and an occasional toss-of-the-head colloquialism puts everything right. More satisfying yet, Mr. Durrell at his best can unfetter our imagination. Of 'Swans' he can write:

the empty space
Which follows them about,
Stained by their whiteness when they pass.

A joy in his gifts tempts Mr. Watkins at times to over-fluency but when words and glow are controlled he is a compelling poet whose scholarship is always happy. That glow, by the way, which comes from a profusion of sight words, is puzzling at first. So is the odd echo of F. R. Higgins. Mr. Watkins has many poems one could often re-read. I already have and will again.

P. J. MADDEN.

THE COURSE OF IRISH VERSE IN ENGLISH. by Robert Farren (*Sheed & Ward*, 6/8).

Mr. Farren, in *The Course of Irish Verse in English*, has written a text-book—albeit a text-book in modern terms, and for the modern reader—but, nevertheless, a text-book. This comment, however, is not made in dispraise, the saving clause being embodied in the words ‘in modern terms.’ For many years experts in various specialised fields have been writing text-books with the express aim, not only of helping students of the subject in question, but also of enticing the *man-in-the-street*, hitherto ignorant and with interest unawakened, and of transforming him into anything ranging from an infrequent dabbler to a full-time devotee. Naturally, such a task demands of the writer more than just knowledge and clarity of expression. The knowledge must be applied soothingly, like an ointment, and the clarity of expression decked out with ease, charm, marked individuality, and, if possible, humour.

Along these lines there has been much of sheer delight from the most unexpected fields and, indeed, some classics; Launcelot Hogben’s *Mathematics for the Million* was one such. But I do not think there has been anything at all like this in the field of literary criticism and Mr. Farren’s book is the nearest approach to it I have read. It is not, of course, so surprising to find an Irish writer doing this for literary criticism—he is much more likely to have the required qualities of style than the British or American writer—nor is it surprising that, of Irish writers, Mr. Farren should be the one, since the first hints were noticeable in his earlier *Towards an Appreciation of Poetry*.

And yet the peculiar thing is that this text-book about Irish poets in the English language was, I am sure, written with no such intention of being acceptable to the person who has not previously read any literary criticism. The author’s aims, as he points out in his preface, are the purely literary ones of showing ‘the course of Irish poetry in the English language; to observe and remark upon the growth in Irishness, in separate existence from English poetry, of the poetry that was and is composed in Ireland or by Irishmen.’

In doing so, Mr. Farren naturally makes many statements with which not everyone will agree. In Thomas Moore, he says, ‘for the first time, an important poet was influenced by Gaelic song—not indeed by the language or its verse, for he knew neither, but by the music to which it was sung; and the effect was the same.’ Surely the effect referred to was quite

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different. What Mr. Farren says about *At the Mid Hour of Night*—that it has rhythms never before made in English poetry but easily matched in Gaelic poetry—is quite true. But that is nearly all the poem has; what it has not is the special, indescribable feel of Gaelic poetry, and this it might have had, had Moore known the language or its verse. As Mr. Farren says later, Moore was ‘complete, professional, but ‘thin’.’ That is just it—he lacked something hard to body out his talent. A knowledge of Gaelic and its verse might have given him that body. Perhaps in this lay the chief difference between Moore and Mangan.

D.M.

ASK YOUR DRAPER FOR

Kilkenny

**Kilkenny Woollen
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Correspondence



DEVON, November, 1948.

Dear Sirs:

Of your kindness, please allow a few comments on Mr. Colum's review of my work in the last issue of your Magazine.

Captain White was indeed the son of a general, but that makes him no better than if he had been the son of a gun. I know more about the boots given to those whose broken boots "prevented them from marching." Mr. Colum mentions the incident romantically, but he doesn't add that most of those who got these boots pawned them—some for food, some for drink—a few days later. Captain White had a bad habit of distributing largesse to those who flattered him, and when advised against this practice, resented it. On one occasion, he promised a fine topcoat he was wearing to three different men. No one could depend on his enthusiasm for more than a day. He ordered the uniforms from Arnott's, guaranteeing fifty pounds for them, without a by your leave from the Army Committee; and the collection of this money meant work night and day to promote a festival in Croydon Park that the Captain shouldn't be short. The fact is that Captain White was a noble fellow, but a nuisance.

Mr. Colum says a more serious thing when he writes: "Sean O'Casey puts down some absurd verses which he says Arthur Griffith wrote. On my word he never did." He implies that I composed these myself, and attributed them to Griffith in an effort to "belittle" the man. Now, Griffith not only wrote the verses, but sang them at a public meeting in Mayo during the election contest between John O'Donnell and John McBride. I do not ask anyone to take my word for this. If Mr. Colum is interested, he will find the incident fully recorded—with many more verses, worse than these I gave—in GRIFFITH AND HIS TIMES, written by Geo. Lyons, the life-long follower and friend of Griffith, and published by The Talbot Press in 1923.

Whatever other fault I may have, I do try to be careful of my facts.—Yours sincerely,

SEAN O'CASEY

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

MARY LAVIN: Gained an international reputation since the publication of her first book of short stories 'Tales from Beetive Bridge.' A novel and two further collections of stories followed and her second novel is due shortly. Lives in Co. Meath.

MICHAEL LUCEY: Born in Scilly, a village outside Kinsale, in 1926. Served in the Irish Army during the Emergency and is now in the R.A.S.C., stationed at Aldershot. His first stories appeared in previous issues of IRISH WRITING.

MAURICE DUGGAN: Born in New Zealand, 1922, of Irish parents. His work has been published in literary magazines in New Zealand and Australia and a short prose-piece by him appeared in IRISH WRITING No. 5.

EWART MILNE: Born in Dublin, 1903, now living in England. His work has appeared widely in Ireland, Britain, and America, and he has had five collections published.

SAM HARRISON: Born Armagh, 1920. Graduate and Doctor of Philosophy of Trinity College, Dublin. Has contributed verse to various periodicals and anthologies. Married, and at present living in Switzerland.

PADRAIC COLUM: Born Longford, 1881. Was a prominent figure in the beginning of the Irish Theatre Movement, and has written plays, novels, poems, essays and stories. Is a leading critic and lecturer in America where he now lives.

PATRICIA HUTCHINS: Born Ardnagashel, Bantry. Contributes to many Irish and British periodicals and also broadcasts. Is interested in documentary films and has frequently written for 'Sight and Sound.'

DESMOND J. CLARKE: Born Dublin, 1907, and has been writing since the age of sixteen. His stories have appeared in 'The Bell,' 'The Dublin Magazine,' 'New Writing,' 'New English Weekly,' etc., and he has a volume of stories and two

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novels awaiting publication. Librarian of the Royal Dublin Society and a 'very amateur gardener and bee-keeper.'

MERVYN WALL: Born Dublin, 1908. Educated Bonn, Germany, and U.C.D. Has written three plays, and two novels. Of his novels, the first, 'The Unfortunate Fursey,' was published in Britain and the U.S.A., and has been translated into French and Hungarian. 'The Return of Fursey,' his second novel, is a sequel which was published recently. He has also had many short stories published in Ireland, England and the U.S.A. Is on the programme staff of Radio Eireann.

JOHN HEWITT: Born Belfast, 1907. Is Keeper of the Art Division of Belfast Museum and Art Gallery. Has lectured, broadcast, written art and literary criticism, and his verse has appeared widely in Ireland and Britain. A collection of verse 'No Rebel Word,' was recently published.